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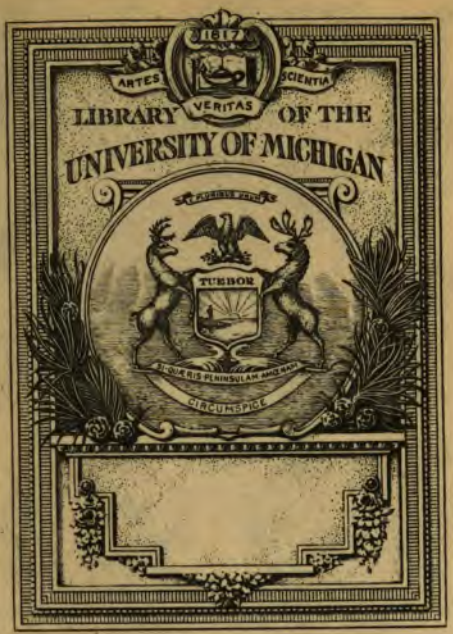
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THE UNDERTAKER'S GARLAND

SOME RECENT BORZOI BOOKS

FRIDAY NIGHTS
Edward Garnett

STREAKS OF LIFE
Ethel M. Smyth

THE RED GARDEN
Henning Kehler

SONGS OF YOUTH
Mary Dixon Thayer

TERTIUM ORGANUM
P. D. Ouspensky

THE EIGHTEEN-NINETIES
Holbrook Jackson

WAITING FOR DAYLIGHT
H. M. Tomlinson

FRONTIERS OF THE AFTER LIFE
Edward C. Randall

THE UNDERTAKER'S GARLAND

JOHN PEALE BISHOP
EDMUND WILSON JR.

Decorations by Boris Artzybasheff

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Tu vero dubitabis et indignabere obire,
Mortua quoi vita est prope jam vivo atque videnti?

LUCRETIUS, III.

Fitti nel limo, dicon: "Tristi fummo
  Nell'aer dolce che dal sol s'allegra,
Portando dentro accidioso fummo:
  Or ci attristiam nella belletta negra."

DANTE, INF., III.

Where do we go from here?

ATTRIBUTED TO THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER.

By Mr. Bishop: Lucifer, The Funeral of Mary Magdalene, The Death of a Dandy, The Funeral of an Undertaker, The Madman's Funeral, The Death of God, and Resurrection.

By Mr. Wilson: The Preface, The Death of the Last Centaur, The Funeral of a Romantic Poet, The Death of an Efficiency Expert, The Death of a Soldier, Emily in Hades, and the Epilogue.

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PREFACE

We have often been asked what determined us to write a book about death. It has been pointed out that we were very young and ordinarily in the best of health and that everybody at our age was supposed to be bursting with life. We were frequently reminded that Sir Thomas Browne had been fifty-three when he wrote his *Urn Burial* and that even Jeremy Taylor was thirty-eight when he published *Holy Dying*. Indeed, when our purpose became generally known, a certain alarm was manifested,—for the belief in the immortality of the soul is still held in some quarters, so that there are still a number of people who stand in the utmost terror of death. When we assured the world that we were treating the subject from a merely artistic point of view and that, with the best will in the world, we could give no guarantees of immortality, because we neither of us believed that any God in his senses would be willing to provide eternal life for such feeble virtues as our own, we were warned that, in dealing thus with death, we were attempting a very dangerous experiment and probably jeopardizing invaluable souls by a wanton act of impiety. Certain individuals high in the Church even wrote us threatening letters.

But, on the whole, in the America of today im-

mortality is a dead issue. With the preoccupation with material things, with prosperity and production, the New Jerusalem has faded. Or rather it has been brought to earth. For, whereas the bourgeoisie are comfortable and consequently do not need consolation for the miseries of this life in the prizes of the next, those members of the proletariat who are not eager to become bourgeois themselves have attempted to render life endurable, not by the Paradise of the early Christians, but simply by imagining a future earth transformed by justice and plenty. In all cases, it is earth, not Heaven, that the people are counting on; the interest in Paradise has cooled greatly since the Middle Ages.

We have therefore really been troubled very little by complaints at our lack of faith. It is rather the gloominess of our theme which has provoked the most objection; for, in America, the gloomier aspects of life have till lately been banned from literature. To refer to them had constituted a sin against our conception of ourselves, against the illusion that life in America leaves nothing to be desired. To admit the possibility of pain has amounted to an unpatriotic act. So that, even though death is a disaster as common in America as elsewhere, it has never been as popular a subject among us as it has for example in Italy. We have, in fact, been warned many times that we were deliberately making our book unpopular and that we should never be able to sell it.

Why, however, in spite of this discouragement, we have persisted in our project to the end will, we hope, be more easily understood when our careers have been considered a little and the influences to which we have been subjected have been studied in relation to our work.

We were both educated at Princeton University just before the United States entered the war. In that most carefree of all the colleges, where Apollo lies slumbrous and lazy, we occasionally caught from the lips of the god an oracle muttered in sleep and though we conducted ourselves in such a way as not to be publicly stoned by our fellows, we really succeeded, none the less, in breathing with a certain freedom. It was only after we left Princeton that our thoughts were turned away from life. It was when the old base-ball fields were transformed into drill-grounds, and the class-rooms where we had learned French and Greek were abandoned to artillery courses. It was when we both found ourselves in the army and were sent to France.

But, reader, do not be alarmed! You will find no tales of heroism here. We were neither of us ever in much danger of getting killed ourselves. But to any one not elevated in a pulpit or barricaded behind an editorial desk the overpowering presence of death, that stood darkly in every heart, seemed to rob the very sun of its splendor and make the stars stab him like knives. No matter how rich men's minds had been or how full of joy and life,

they were all turned now without release to the business of bringing death. The very quartermaster who matched suits was preparing shrouds for men to die in; the very worker in the hospital who patched up the gas and shell wounds was only getting men in shape to die and to inflict death. The air of the whole world seemed poisoned with decay; one could escape it nowhere; one choked in the very autumn clearness and the winds of spring, which were tainted now with the foulness of those seven million dead.

All Europe reached a point at last where it could think of nothing but death. It could no longer bemuse itself with rhetoric into forgetting the realities of the front nor ignore the collapse of six great nations in the unchanged routine of home. If it continued to indulge in death, it would certainly die of its vice. For the victor, scarcely less than for the vanquished, there could be nothing but starvation and despair. Hungry, without heart and helpless, they could not even put a bold face on their work; they could hardly keep themselves alive any longer for the purpose of being killed.

And then the war came to a close (after twenty-four hours' delay) and Marshal Foch entered Metz on the back of a white horse. But it was too late for people to enjoy this triumph as perhaps they should have done. In its overwhelming weakness and exhaustion, which had stultified sorrow itself, Europe could hardly raise a paean of victory or

utter a cry of relief. The people could only strike dully against the oppression of their own States; they could no longer think much beyond their sacrifices to the cause in which they had been made nor feel much more anger against an enemy as miserable as themselves. The newspapers were still grieving, to be sure, that the official killing was done, for, though prodigious enthusiasts for death, they were more interested in the slaughter at the front than in the slaughter of the new generation which was just being born at home. But people began to wonder whether the real conflict was the one which had come to an end with the white horse of Marshal Foch and the occupation of Metz; and the men who had been fighting side by side for going on five years, now that they found themselves at home, turned their machine guns on each other.

The spring came to France like a benediction, with spaciousness and calm, yet from every quarter one heard nothing but the harsh cries of death—of boundary and civil war, of massacre and assassination. It appeared that the human race was composed exclusively of enemies who were intent on making use of any pretext to achieve their neighbour's extinction, even at the cost of their own. One wondered in dismay if there were any concessions (even of the sacred principle of property) too great to be made for the purpose of balking the contagion of death and restoring to that agonized continent the freedom of life again. When the time came for us

to leave Europe we departed with relief—with the vision of returning to a land of prosperity and good feeling.

But it was not the Statue of Liberty—for which the soldiers had longed—that first met our eyes as the symbol of the country to which we were returning: it was the black chimneys of factories that soiled the very summer dawn, shedding darkness from their upthrust arms as the Statue could never shed light.

For hitherto we had seen very little of our native civilization. In France we had thought confidently of America as a place where life still ran high; but in America we found that life itself had become a sort of death, and we longed for the Sorbonne hill where even Dante had once come and where the humanities still kept their freshness in the dustiest of the bookshops, and for the amorous evenings of May, full of soft and merry voices, that lie lightly over Paris.

At home, the humanities had little chance against the Anti-Vice Society and the commercialism and industrialism which had caught up the very professors from the great universities; and as for poor *volupté*, she had died in the blank grey streets: for New York was no more fitted for love than it was designed for art. Our countrywomen seemed strange creatures after the kind witty smiles of the French and at first we could hardly tell them from the men except by the fact that they were duller.

No: even in the America of peace-time we looked

for life in vain. Our cries "for madder music and for stronger wine" met with absolutely no response, and we were informed that any attempt to get the latter would be considered a criminal offence. For money, it appeared, was the thing to get, not music nor wine. Men denied themselves music and wine, and everything else that makes life amiable; they gave themselves up to incessant labours, with austerity, with consecration. They secluded themselves in bleak offices, like anchorites in cells: their relations with their associates became more frigid than those of the strictest religious order and their very correspondence was dictated in a bare and graceless style, more barbarous than the poorest Latin of a mediaeval monk.

But it was not for the same reasons as the saints that men had renounced the colours of life. The great ascetics had mortified the flesh that they might live more intensely in the spirit. But the business man despised the spirit even more than he despised the flesh. His purpose in his barren existence of severity and application, in ignoring alike the questioning mind and the flaming imagination, was simply to make something cheap and to sell it to somebody dear—a pasteboard suit-case, an alfalfa cigarette, a paraffin chocolate bar. And to this end he set thousands of his fellows to the most monotonous and exhausting labour—a labour which reduced young men and women to such a dreary stultification that they hardly knew how to enjoy themselves when

they came blinking from their confinement into the sour air of the city and the hardness of the streets—a labour which reduced human hands (that had made so many fine things) to the offices of levers and shafts and demanded of the human mind (which had spun so many myths) that it confine its entire attention to a single mechanical act, performed again and again—a labour, in short, which took the manufacture of conveniences and of luxuries and of nuisances for the end of life itself, and compelled mankind to make itself miserable in the production of comfort.

And as a result of this system we found civil war in America scarcely less acute than that of Europe. We were confronted with a colossal strike in which citizens were terrorised and murdered for believing that twelve hours a day was too long to work in a blast-furnace. A revolt against the intolerable life of the steel mills and the mines was punished with a repression and a blackguardism which we thought had been exorcised forever when the Czar's knout was broken. And it was not only among labourers that free speech and free assemblage were done away with: so panic-stricken had the employers become for fear they should be made to lose money that they arrested citizens without warrant, deported aliens without trial and were finally able to revoke elections to one of the state assemblies by refusing to admit the representatives whom the people had legally chosen.

This should, of course, have meant a vindication

by the people of their rights, but public opinion was dead; it was left entirely to the newspapers. The citizens of the Republic did not know that they had any rights. At a time when it was possible for a Socialist to be elected Prime Minister of monarchic Sweden, it was impossible for Socialist representatives to keep their seats in an American assembly; the people remained completely indifferent to a provocation more politically vital than that which had thrown all Paris into turmoil at the time of the Dreyfus case. The Americans would let the rich employers do anything to them they pleased because they all hoped enthusiastically to become rich employers themselves.

Not, however, that the employers derived much life from the death they inflicted on others. As repressed and exhausted as their employees and driven by a fiercer strain, they not infrequently broke down when they had arrived at middle age and the many nerve sanitariums were full of bewildered millionaires who had found time at last to wonder where they had been going so fast. Their children, grown up in a world of bourgeois ideals, where the emphasis which their grandfathers had placed on religion had been shifted to respectability, learned no aristocratic freedom with the freedom which money gave them. Too often they docilely acceded to the office chairs of their fathers and, if they had latent superior qualities of imagination or intelligence, would be distracted at their desks by unin-

telligible longings for another manner of life of which they had never been told. So they carried on their fathers' work by upholding as their moral philosophy the commandments of sobriety and efficiency which they religiously taught their employees and to which they themselves were slaves.

Can you wonder that we thought much of death? that it finally became an obsession with us? The city streets where we walked were as deep and as dark as graves; the great buildings seemed to us like tombs where the dead lay tier on tier. Wherever the characteristic activity of our time had passed, the earth appeared charred and sterile, littered with rubbish and bones. We found our hymns to beauty and to love all turning into funeral dirges and, instead of our old witty trifles, we fell to writing epitaphs. In a word, our environment and age have at last proved too strong for us, and, in a spirit which we honestly hope is one of loyal Americanism, we have decided that we shall best interpret our country in a book devoted to death.

We do not, however, for a moment, claim to be original in this. We know well that the plan of our work is anything but novel. In the first quarter of the XVth century, when France seemed scarcely to live, impoverished, devastated and anarchic with confused and terrible wars, there was current a form of public entertainment called the Dance of Death. Torture and assassination and famine and plague, as well as the foreign and civil wars

that swept back and forth across the country, had made the people of the XVth century as familiar with death and the dead as the people of our own time were to become five hundred years later. But they dramatized the horror of their lives in a kind of comic morality, which was still popular as a subject for artists as late as the great Holbein. In these pictures one sees a sprightly skeleton either dancing at the head of a procession or coming separately and unexpectedly to each one of his victims in turn: he breaks the armour of the Knight, speeds the Ploughman on his last furrow and diverts the Astrologer from his globe by thrusting a skull under his nose; in the guise of a peasant, he fells the Count with his own heavy 'scutcheon and slips a necklace of dead men's bones about the Countess's neck; he breaks the Judge's staff and poisons the King's wine; he tears the Abbess from her convent and the hat from the Cardinal's head; and he finally carries off the Pope himself in the act of crowning somebody king.

Yes: at the darkest point of the Middle Ages people made a farce of death. To the people of the XVth century death itself had more life in it than life has today.

Lucifer

I plodded homeward through the snow and stubble,
A wallet heavy with junk upon my back,
And saw the sun, a fire-distended bubble,
Sway over the stiff trees grown flat and black.
And as the sun, perceptibly descended,
Tumbled a cloud of carmine to the snow,
A god came striding through the tree boles, splendid
In pride of youth, naked, bearing a bow.
I dropped my pack and raced across the hollow,
Stumbled, and sank knee-deep in drifts, and cried:
"God of the silver bow, divine Apollo,
It is not true that you with Hellas died!"
With the profound tenderness of a sage or brother,
The god turned, and tremendous thunder flamed:
"Apollo died long ago. I am that other
Who sang. For me the morning star was named."

The Death of the Last Centaur

οἶνος καὶ Κένταυρον, ἀγακλυτὸν Εὐρυτίωνα,
ἄασ' ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ μεγαθύμου Πειριθόοιο,
ἐς Λαπίθας ἐλθόνθ'· ὁ δ' ἐπεὶ φρένας ἄασεν οἴνῳ,
μαινόμενος κάκ' ἔρεξε δόμον κατὰ Πειριθόοιο·
ἥρωας δ' ἄχος εἶλε, διὲκ προθύρου δὲ θύραζε
ἕλκον ἀναΐξαντες, 'απ' οὔατα νηλέϊ χαλκῷ
ῥῖνάς τ' ἀμήσαντες· ὁ δὲ φρεσὶν ἦσιν ἀασθεὶς
ἤιεν ἦν ἄτην ὀχέων ἀεσίφρονι θυμῷ

Odyssey, XXI

The Scene is Greenwich Village.

It is time for me to die: I have no place
Among you save this cold and fetid stall,
Where clotted cobwebs make a dingy lace
For dusty windows and against the wall
Hangs rotting harness from some vanished hack.
Soon there will be no stables left at all
In towns like this!—since now, it seems, you lack
Not only men, but horses even, here
Where men are moved along a metal track.
In such a world my bones will have no bier:
You will bray my bones to dust, to scatter fine
Among your crops; you will sell my carcass dear
For potted meat; you will sell these hoofs of mine—
These hoofs that first brought fire from Pelion.

I shall have no burial—I, who am half divine! . . .
  Ixion was my father, Ares' son;
My mother was a cloud; and I was born
  In that lost world that, waking to the sun,
By the clear light of an untarnished morn,
  Beheld in every form that moved and shone
The candid nobleness and beauty worn
  By children and by gods.—But I, alone,
Surviving all my kind, beheld the dawn
  Fade like a flower's freshness that, full-blown,
Is over-blown and, with loose lips a-yawn,
  Scatters petals and rank fragrance, till, at last,

When all the heroes and the gods were gone,
  Hearing tales of how the giant race had passed
Beyond the sea, where, ploughing a fresh ground,
  They fashioned palaces superb and vast,
I sailed to this new continent and found
  Great buildings and great labours, but, here, too,
For all the monstrous bulk and terrible sound,
  No heroes and no gods.—Nay, even you
Who would buy Beauty back at bitter cost—
  A thing your fathers' fathers never knew—
Would lose your selves here where the streets are lost,
  Here where the moaning boats bring peace a space,
With news of oceans you have never crossed;
  Who gape about me for an ancient grace
Falling palely now, as from November sky

The last cold light—you are not of my race! . . .
Hear then and wonder of what race am I.

From clouds that were our kindred;
From forests wild and wet;
From meadows drowzy with dull gold,
That kept the bright day yet—
We came, like thunder from the hills,
Before the sun was set.

The summer air that slept so still,
A tideless pond of gold,
Cut past the bent bows of our breasts
Like rapids, swift and cold;
And shepherds, when they heard our hoofs,
Drove in their flocks to fold.

We leapt, with brief and brutal shouts
Of hunt and feast and war;
We ground the thickets low like grass
Nor felt what flesh they tore;
Till, wildly clamouring, we stamped
Before the bridegroom's door.

Our kinsmen crowded to the sill
To welcome us inside—
Our kinsmen, strong as we; yet men
They were and by our side
Their strength was dwarfed, as men who walk
Are dwarfed by men who ride.

They lifted silver basins up
To rinse our fingers clean;
They brought us wine in bowls of gold
To honour their new queen—
A wine as black as mountain pools,
Where Hecate is seen—

A wine that opens wide the heart;
A rude tremendous blast
That bids the fettered soul stand free,
Gay, arrogant and vast—
The prisoned master of the man
Become true lord at last.

Twelve bowls I drank of that great wine
And stood a god revealed!
And I was Heracles, whose hand
Had made the hydra yield—
Who bore the monstrous carcass home
As soldiers bear a shield!

I watched the bride, an eager flame
Of saffron and of red;
I longed to crush her breasts, to bite
Her lips until they bled;
I laughed at such a hoofless whelp
Lord of the bridal bed.

I laughed and, bellowing with desire,
With furious hoofs that spurned

Great bodies stretched in drunkenness,
  Great tables overturned,
I plunged against the heavy air
  And snatched her where she burned.

And roof and hills and heaven itself
  Crashed down about my ears!
Unleashed, they slit my nose with knives;
  They ripped my side with spears;
Their torches bit my very bone!
  My eyes were black with tears!

But still I bore the bride aloft,
  Through all the blows and cries,
Till, biting the muscles of my arms,
  Spitting blood in my eyes,
She writhed away with sinewy limbs
  The mountains had made wise.

But I, all blind and hacked and mad,
  Drawing now at last my sword,
Struck out the door and charged the night,
  That like a river roared,
Till, stumbling in a stream, I stopped,
  Stood sweating in the ford.

Then first I knew that morning was at hand,
  For the air was clear and gray and I could see
My bosom foul with blood and the cruel brand;
  And while I flung chill water about me,

That bit my flesh more fiercely than the bride
With those fox's teeth of hers—then suddenly
The windows of the East were opened wide,
Letting through the skies of day, the summer skies,
Above the shadowy mountains. But I sighed
And, turning in weariness my aching eyes
From the blinding wind of silver Phoebus shakes
From limbs of fire, I climbed a little rise
To a wet green wood all strewn with silver flakes
Of shattered light. It was quiet there. I stood
And heard the first birds stirring in the brakes
And thought how all my load of wine and blood
Would be loosed by gentle sleep; and a strange awe
Came on me, a strange awe that stilled the wood,
As if for a god's presence and I saw
Of a sudden, beneath a dark laurel, noble and grave,
An ancient centaur, moveless as the law
Whereto the mightiest god is but a slave,
That not the wisest god may understand—
Who watched me with eyes clear green like a summer wave
That comes to hush its roaring on the sand
And hard as pebbles, smoothed and smoothed anew,
It laps in ebbing home—so straight and grand
His gaze, I trembled terribly, for I knew
That this was Cheiron, subtle Cronos' son,
The subtlest among mortals, and gods, too,

Who had reared great lords and kings, yet flattered
none,
Whose tongue knew neither insolence nor fear.
And I heard his steady voice: "Eurytion!
What false and violent deed has brought you here
To blink at morning?" Then, as I stood ashamed:
"You have no need to tell me with what spear
Your side is torn nor with what wine enflamed
You have done us this dishonour: well I know,
Knowing all, how—brutal, childish and untamed—
You have wronged our hosts and kinsmen, turned
to foe
By the folly of a boy! And I forsee
The hatred and the labour and the woe
That must waste our years in conflict, till we flee
From Pelion, lost and broken.—Ah, insane!
Ah, wretched race, that never will be free!
What peace can ever win you from your pain?
What life can ever lure you from your death?
Twelve ages have I reared to fight and reign
Your very heroes—teaching them the faith
In strength and skill and honour, and to dare
To follow even beyond the world the breath
Of unknown seas; and strength and skill were fair,
But honour they forgot.—For Jason, at last
Forgetting Colchis and the long despair,
Forgetting that strange love that, in a blast,
Blazed down and burnt him up, one breathless
night
Between two days of terror, came to cast

Medea and her children from his sight;
And Achilles, when his enemy lay slain,
Befouled and broke his limbs in savage spite—
A better man than he.—but direr stain
Is yet to be—for Heracles, the blind,
Made drunk with stolen wine, became immane,
Shall slay his master, Cheiron, from behind—
And all my close-kept memories and all
The calm and noble music of my mind
Shall be lost for a jar of wine and a drunken
brawl!"

He ceased, and I faltered piteously, in shame:
"You blame me justly, master, for our fall—"

"I never blamed you! I find none to blame!"
He cried. "It was not you who made your soul
Seek greatness in wine nor set your flesh aflame
For a bright-eyed woman in a saffron stole.—
Not even myself I blame, who cannot right
So many wrongs: It was not I who stole
Man's godlike heart away with greed and fright!
It was not I who made a jest of it—
And Heracles a fool, for all his might,
And Odysseus a knave, for all his wit!
I did not work to drive with cruel whips
Orestes to his crime nor, mad, admit
One like a lover to his mother's lips
Who, blameless, paid in anguish that poor joy!

It was not I who sped the Grecian ships
And brought the years of darkness against Troy,
Because a fair kind girl had been so quick
To yield her body to an eager boy,
When kisses had grown long! Nay, I am sick
Of blame and blaming! I shall stand and wait
For death to take my light by that base trick—
In silence, under a laurel, gazing straight,
Not wild with tears nor loud with anger now
For that which once had burst me with their spate
And made my boy's blood thunder at my brow:
The rivers robbed of song; the darkened sun;
Love balked of love and both alike brought low;
The fading smoke of Troy her victors won;
The proudest honour pledged to serve a lie. . . .
My works are all dishonoured and undone;
I stand among ruins; naught but this have I:
To hold, without hope or armies, my hard post
Against Fate and the Furies, under the sky."

Say, you who boldly of your wisest boast
They know more than their fathers, have they told
Their scholars more than Cheiron knew?—at most,
Do you heed them more than I heeded him of old?—
For, when he had dressed my wounds and I had slept,
I woke to a world of black and broken gold

And, forgetting all his words, I rose and leapt
  Like a foal and drank the wind, the sea-sharp
    wind
That blows from the Aegean—and I swept
  The savage hills, with nothing in my mind
But pealing hoofs and forests black and green
  And great revenge to take and loot to find
And lust and battle and far sights unseen!

THE FUNERAL OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE

A street in the poorer quarter of Jerusalem. Since the houses of the poor have changed but little in two thousand years, they need no description. Under the houses are shops, and the merchants of fruit, lentils, oil, wine, cheese and fowls stand before the money tables prepared to bargain. Incidentally they add considerably to the stench of the street, which is already redolent with the refuse of dead summers.

The house in the center is noteworthy as being slightly more prosperous and certainly cleaner than the rest. The inhabitants evidently have some other place to throw their garbage than the street. The awnings at the windows are a bit frayed and faded it is true, but remember the former brilliance of their dyes.

The people in the scene are divided into two groups, symbolizing, it would seem, the last judgment. On the right are the Christian folk, who combine the poverty of St. Francis, the filth of St. Anthony, and the boils of St. Simeon Stylites, while antedating these holy men by some centuries. Those on the left have either bathed recently or perfumed themselves—which comes to the same

thing. The men are urbane, aloof; the women gracefully familiar, either too well or too little dressed. In other words they represent respectively the Roman quarter and the Latin quarter of Jerusalem.

The time is early in the reign of Nero.

SIMON—(*a Christian well-digger who resembles an eagle grown old, flabby pouches about the eyes, yellow at the beak*) The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.

ALL THE CHRISTIANS—(*with more than necessary feeling*) Blessed be the name of the Lord!

JUNIUS FABULLUS—(*a young Roman of equestrian family who is learning to govern the world by observing the routine at the procurator's office*) What is this Christianity anyhow?

CALVUS VATINIUS RUBO—(*a flaneur at the upper edge of youth, of an ancient and now rich plebeian family*) It's a kind of poverty cult. The Christians affect to despise the world.

FABULLUS—So should I if I lived here!

VATINIUS—Those who die in their superstition are to live again, in a new Jerusalem, where they will sit at long tables and be served pomegranates, white bread and honeyed wine to the perpetual playing of harps.

FABULLUS—It sounds like the summer I spent in Corinth.

VATINIUS—It's only those who have had nothing in this world who want everything in the next.

MIRIAM—(*a young Christian woman with wide grey eyes and large hips*) What are all these hussies doing here?

SAPPHIRA—(*a matron with large overhanging teeth who has espoused Christianity along with her husband*) They are old friends of our dear departed sister.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—These painted, frizzled—women? They smell like the public baths. How did poor, dear Mary Magdalene ever come to know these queans?

CHRISTIAN MATRON—She was one of them my dear.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—One of these! That holy woman? Why Brother Jehosophat says that just before she died, there was the faintest flicker of an aureole about her head.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Yes, he'd probably say her fingers were red from sewing, when they were stained with henna. And did you never notice how often she bathed? She called it keeping her body ready for the Lord. But it was simply that she couldn't shake off her old habits.

JUDITH—(*a harlot*) It's a terrible thing to die! To be hidden in the deep earth and never see the trees with fresh green on them in the spring or the blue skies over them in the summer.

CHRYSIS—(*another harlot*) There's a charm for every kind of disease. If you could only get them all, you would never die. I have charms

for twenty-seven diseases. My sailor friends bring them to me. I have a charm for boils from Aleppo and an amulet for fever from Messala.

FIRST HARLOT—Did you know this Magdalene?

SECOND HARLOT—My first lover was a young Roman she had tired of. He had a scar on his left shoulder and used to snore.

SIMON—(*half chanting*) Now this body of corruption has taken on incorruptibility. The carnal body has perished, but the soul is imperishable.

CALLIOCHUS—(*a philosopher of Ephesus, bald-headed, his red beard cut in imitation of the busts of Socrates*) The soul is triangular. Its three sides are feeling, perception and will. Had the soul been circular it would have endured forever.

TERTULLIUS—(*a young Roman poet*) Did you ever know this Magdalene?

THE PHILOSOPHER—I cannot say. No one, as the vulgar say, can escape Venus, the mother of the Gods. But when her fever is upon me I seek the ugliest slut I can find, so that afterwards I may have as long repose as possible.

THE POET—You never knew her. Even without love she had been beautiful. She was my first mistress. Not all my later loves, not even death itself, can take her image from my eyes.

THE PHILOSOPHER—You're a poet, Tertullius, and poetry arises from some drunkenness of the soul. Poetry's older than philosophy, but it's not so worthy.

THE POET—But it is not only through sober reasoning that wisdom comes. The poet in his imagination, the lover in his ecstasy, arrive perhaps at a truth beyond wise men.

THE PHILOSOPHER—So do women, but that does not make them the equal of philosophers.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—I'd like to pull those false frizzles off. To come here among respectable people like this!

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—And at such a time! They might show a little decency!

CHRISTIAN MATRON—I hope no one will think they are friends of mine!

FABULLUS—But the effect of this Christianity on the populace—

VATINIUS—Is excellent! I have a slave who lays out my robes and sandals in the morning. He is now a Christian. I find he shaves me much better since his conversion. He seems better satisfied with his condition. He does, I believe, go out at dawn to sing hymns or something, but as I never rise before noon, I do not find it inconvenient.

FABULLUS—They have no rites then which interfere with the Roman Laws?

VATINIUS—They have only a sort of sacramental supper. My servant has every Thursday evening out in order to attend it.

FIRST HARLOT—I knew her when she was a little girl. We played together in the fields and waded in the noisy brooks. One day she came to me, her two chubby hands behind her back, and said, "Which will you have, beauty or gold?" I did not know which to take and stood hesitating. Then she laughed and gave me with one hand a mite of copper, and with the other a wisp of plucked poppies. "There," she said, "you shall have both. But I don't want either. I want to be loved." And she kissed me on the cheeks.

SECOND HARLOT—My dear, your hair is getting thin around the temples. I have the loveliest ointment to keep the hair from falling. You take a live bat that's been found sleeping at midnight in a tomb, and crush his wing with a mixture of honey, goose-grease and the ashes of a dormouse. Then you heat it in a brazier and add a sprinkling of cinnamon, saffron, and the dust of last year's roses. Just try a little each night before going to bed.

SIMON—They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, but I am in the spirit.

THE POET—In the flesh beauty crumbles, fades and is lost, but in the mind beauty is immortal. Magdalene is dead; but my verses survive.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Sister Martha says that as soon as sister Mary was dead she rummaged through her things. What do you think she found?

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—Some relic of our Lord, no doubt.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Relic! She found a box full of fine ointment, and a package of spices for mixing with wine.

FABULLUS—My suspicions of Christianity are purely political. Being a Roman gentleman, I entertain an open mind toward all the ideas of my age. But as for the Christians—they refuse to recognize the Roman gods.

VATINIUS—But you yourself—do not take the gods seriously, I hope?

FABULLUS—I am a Roman. I believe in the Roman gods, whether they exist or not. It is their worship which has brought us our present prosperity.

VATINIUS—But what has Rome to fear from a lot of hungry slaves?

FABULLUS—All revolutions begin in the belly and mount to the brain.

VATINIUS—When that happens, Christianity will have become a fashionable cult at Rome. Once let the Pontifex Maximus turn Christian, or

better still, the Emperor, and all danger from the Christians is over. They will beome the chief conservers of the existing order.

SIMON—The body which was conceived in iniquity is dead, but through faith the just live again.

FIRST HARLOT—There's nothing you can do for the dead.

SECOND HARLOT—I thought I was going to die once, but I prayed to Diana and was well in three days. I have a little shrine to her in my bed-chamber. A silversmith from Ephesus gave it to me. They are very generous, the Ephesians. I like generous men.

FIRST HARLOT—I have brought these flowers, laburnum and yellow lilies, which grow by the cool well-side, and roses, such as the young women beyond Jordan put in their hair. I think she would have liked my bringing these flowers.

SECOND HARLOT—I like flowers. They make a room smell fresh and cool.

FIRST HARLOT—Do you think they'd mind if I went in and put them at the foot of her bed?

SECOND HARLOT—Who cares about these Christians? They never bring us anything. I had an old Christian come up and take his son away from me last Friday. Right in the wine shop too, before all the people.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—I believe one of those hussies is going into the house.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—She's looking toward

the door. A woman like that in an honest Christian's home! And poor sister Magdalene lying there, too!

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Don't speak that way about sister Magdalene. She's gone to her reward. At least I hope so, though there have been times I've doubted very much if the Lord had anything to do with the likes of her.

FABULLUS—You are dining then at Sulpicia's?

VATINIUS—No. With Publius Rufus.

FABULLUS—Until tomorrow, then. Farewell. (*He passes down the street to the left.*)

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—She's starting up the steps.

CHRISTIAN MATRON—She'll get there over my dead body. (*She runs quickly up the steps and stands, arms akimbo, in front of the door. Judith, the first harlot, stands hesitating at the foot of the steps.*)

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Take those filthy weeds away from here! You can't carry your abominations into this house.

SIMON—Soft words, sister.

SECOND HARLOT—(*walks deliberately up the steps, and stares into the matron's face.*) You will call us names, will you? Take that! (*She gives her a shove which sends her sprawling down the steps.*) And that! (*Follows after her and kicks her.*)

CHRISTIAN MATRON—(*scrambling to her feet*)

You painted Babylonian! I'll show you! You with that dead hair frizzled on your head! (*She grabs the curls which fall over the harlot's ears in her strong hands, and shakes her head violently back and forth as a puppy would a rat, while the courtesan retorts with unaimed kicks at her shins.*)

THE POET—We can't let this go on! It's neither dignified nor sensible.

THE PHILOSOPHER—But no one expects a woman to be either. (*Chrysis, the harlot, manages to extricate herself from the matron's grasp, rushes at her headlong, and again bowls her over, straddles her prostrate body and attempts to pinion the matron's arms with one hand.*)

SIMON—Though they beat the breath out of your body and hack you with two-edged swords, regard them not, for so did they to the prophets before you.

SECOND HARLOT—You will scratch my eyes out, will you?

CHRISTIAN MATRON—Get off me. You're mauling the life out of me. (*The harlot for the moment has one arm free, which she uses with good effect.*)

SIMON—Though they saw you with swords and commit all manner of evil unto you, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is the reward in heaven. (*Vatinius lifts Chrysis by her shoulders, holds her arms as in a vice.*)

VATINIUS—You can't do this sort of thing. You'll get into trouble with the police. You know how disastrous that would be for you. (*The Christian regains her feet and begins pummelling the harlot's breast.*)

CHRISTIAN MATRON—I'll show you how to treat an honest woman!

SIMON—(*steps between the two, and receives a few belated blows himself.*) Be long suffering, sister, patient to them that mistreat you, showing loving kindness to them that hate you.

SECOND HARLOT—(*accustomed though she is to the vulgar indignities of the crowd, struggles with rage against the matron.*Q Virago!

CHRISTIAN MATRON—(*Unable to dodge between the old well-digger and the harlot, thrusts her head forward impotently.*) The slut!

SIMON—The other cheek, sister.

VATINUS—(*to Chrysis, the harlot*)—You've made enough of a scene for one day. You'd better go back to the city. (*Judith, unnoticed, picks up the flowers and sits on the steps, weeping softly.*)

SECOND HARLOT—(*to the matron*) You fat lump! (*Vatinius leads her away to the left.*)

CHRISTIAN MATRON—(*toward the retreating pair*) You painted baggage! You lilac-nosed, loose-livered, light-fingered wench! You daughter of a mangy dog! You—you—you

THE POET—A peroration in 'yous'.

THE PHILOSOPHER—Could you lend me the price of drunkenness? I can hear the stars falling. (*He takes several coins from the poet and follows after the harlot.*)

SIMON—(*goes up the steps and listens at the door of the house.*) Not a sound!

CHRISTIAN MATRON—After the way I've been treated, you can't expect me to stay here. It all comes of letting such women leave their own quarter.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WOMAN—But Sister Mary—?

CHRISTIAN MATRON—After the way I've been treated! With a face like mine! (*She moves her hand over her bleeding cheeks.*) Funeral or no funeral—(*She and Miriam go out at the right.*)

SIMON—(*comes down the steps and stands holding his paunch with a deprecating gesture.*) The burial of the dead is delayed. This flesh—which God knows I annihilate every day—must have its due. Let us go and break our midday bread. (*He leaves the scene, and the remaining Christians follow sheepishly. There are now left but Tertullius, the poet, and Judith, the first harlot. There is a pause. Then he goes quietly to the steps and lifts her up. She is still weeping softly.*)

JUDITH—You do not know how I loved her.

TERTULLIUS—I, too, loved her. We two—

(*The door opens and an aged elder appears.*)

THE ELDER—The peace of the Lord be upon you. (*He descends the steps. Borne by six men, the bier of Mary Magdalene, who in her life had been beloved by the poet, the harlot and one other, appears in the doorway.*)

JUDITH—There's nothing to say now, except farewell.

TERTULLIUS—She can but fare as the dead fare, which is not well. For all we have known and loved was nourished by the light, and where the dead are is no light, not even a vain desire for splendour stirring in the startled east nor diminished light of quiet stars. (*The last procession of the Christian saint passes down the steps and from the scene. At a little distance there follows, out of all that had so lately been there, the poet and the harlot, leaning on the poet's arm.*)

THE FUNERAL OF A ROMANTIC POET

Paris: circa 1840.

A friend speaks:

It should have been a day of storm and cloud
  And thunderous winds, of autumn's banners hurled
In flaming shreds to fashion earth a shroud—
  Superb despair of some defeated world!
It should have been the hour when evening's hand
  Her tragic mantle for the hills has brought
And turned the trees to presences that stand
  As proud and sombre as a poet's thought!

By some wild cairn they should have buried him,
  Where earth, upstarting, clenches stony fists;
Where birds that swim the bleak abysses scream—
  Cry out in lonely pain among the mists!

A cousin speaks:

But here the garish August sun betrays
  A vulgar earth of drowziness and dust,
Of trees like giant weeds and turbid haze
  And roads that tarnish mourning with their rust;

A teeming earth, contented and immune,
  Who knows no sound of sympathy to make,
But slumbers through the summer afternoon,
  Too gross and sluggard ever to awake.

He lies among the common swarm she breeds,
  The gaudy wreaths that every peasant craves,
The black and purple crosses, decked with beads,
  That make men foolish even in their graves.

He lies with neither cypresses nor yews
  To dignify this dismallest of things:
That one short fever should have slain his muse
  And made him fold his many-coloured
    wings. . . .

I tell you that these poets are all mad!—
  And worse when half the world is at their heel,
When men forget they must be fed and clad
  To follow the vain grails their dreams reveal.

Through all the anarchy of forty years,
  I've watched them at the wicket of my bank—
Deceitful, stupid, impotent with fears,
  Wise only when they think to hoard a franc;

When they were told revolt would make them free
  By rhapsodists and dreamers like our friend,
They rose and drowned the city, like a sea,
  And left us only coins we couldn't spend;

Until another dreaming lord of men
  Deceived them with another dream awhile
And made them rob their treasuries again
  To strew their bones from Moscow to the Nile.

Then, not content to drive their fellows mad,
  They needs must bring the Heavens to their side,
Must hear the waves lament when they are sad,
  Must make the Pyrenees proclaim their pride;

And there was one who would not be consoled
  But, with his heart, must hear the boulders break—
Though words could never leave the winds less cold
  Nor sighing stir a ripple from the lake—

The friend interrupts:
"The Lake"? The Lake forgets? While mortal kind
Keep close the songs where Beauty's hand is set—
Ah, night with words of sorrow in the wind!
  Ah, rocks that speak!—the Lake shall not forget!

For here a lover once wept lost delight,
  For here a lover wept that love was gone,
Who filled his arms with splendour in the night,
  Yet left him empty-handed with the dawn.

Ah, you who, shrinking earthward, dare to mock
  The winds that sweep your counting-house away,

Who labour to exclude with cunning lock
  The gods whose shadows make your door-
    step grey!

Think you the years that rob you while they run
  Shall let your children's children, gazing back,
Behold the tawdry graves, the blowzy sun,
  The banker cousin in his proper black?

I know what they must see!—an empty room,
  Close-smelling, exquisite and chilling cold,
Where taper flames are trebled through the gloom
  By mirrors wreathed with little gods of gold;

A handsome portrait, cynically bland;
  A dainty silken fan; a broidered glove;
Cards fallen loosely from a listless hand;
  Fine volumes that speak wittily of love.

Then slowly the low windows cloud with light;
  The candles show for paste; there stirs about
A little wind from gardens wet with night
  That sets them fluttering and puffs them out;

And white-foot morning breaks her cobwebs grey
  To walk the close-walled alley-ways alone,
To thrill with light, in gardens fresh from May,
  The very frozen goddesses of stone;

She trolls a song that girls unwedded sing
  Who wash their linen, singing, in Lorraine;

And men look out of window, wondering,
  And suddenly behold the hills again!—

The hills where wildness lifts the heart like wine;
  The lake thick-misted still with lovers' tears;
Dim streams where men may drink the peace divine
  That broods in coolness by forgotten weirs.

Like hearts that scorn the littleness of life,
  Companions to the mountains and the sea,
Their hearts, pierced through with beauty like
      a knife,
  Cry out in tears and anger to go free!

A storm breaks, monstrous, blackening the air,
  In fury against Life, the base, the blind,
Who brings the noblest passion to despair,
  Who slays the bravest swordsman from behind!

I tell you that your summer makes too bold
  To mock men's eyes with earth's eternal
      norm—
These only shall our children's eyes behold:
  The mountains and the morning and the storm!

The Death of a Dandy

Le Dandy doit aspirer à être sublime,
sans interruption. Il doit vivre et
dormir devant un miroir.
—Charles Baudelaire

The exquisite banality of rose and ivory:
Shadows of ivory carved into panels, stained
And decayed in the moulding; rose-colour looped
Casting a shadow of mauve; blown cherubs
Bulging in silver,
Lift six tapers to the lighted mirror.

A dusk, deep as the under side of a rose,
Is curtained under the old bed-dome.
Contracting the coverlet, a shape lies
Which may or may not be a man.

What thoughts should an old man have
In the London autumn
Between dusk and darkness?
Behind the shrunken eyelids, what apparitions?
What pebbles rattle in a dry stream?

A boy with a pale, lovely, dissolute face
Sprawled on the green baize, among the cards,

A Spanish pistol dropped from one hand—
Seen from the glazed squares of the club, a street
Cobbled with faces, bundles of rags and lice,
A yellow dwarf rising with protruding face—
Gilded Indian gamecocks clawing blood
Amid the clapping of pale hairless hands—
Lady Barfinger, masked in satin, disclosing her gums,
Laboured graces of a cracked coquette—
A Jew that came on sliding haunches,
Crouched, and with distended palms
Whined for his pledges—Alvanley,
Embroidered in silver foil, poised at the Court,
The ball a mirror of silvery Alvanleys.

Phantoms under a cloudy ceiling, uneasy images,
Sentences that never come to a period.
Thoughts of an old dandy shrunk to a nightgown.

The chamfered fall of silken rose—
Muffling London and the autumn rain—
Lifts and recurves,
A beautiful young man,
Naked, but for a superb white tiewig,
Moves in with slow pacings of a cardinal
Dreaming on his cane.

The firelight blushes on the suave
Thighs of the young man, as he glides
From his calm with an inessential gesture

To brush his tiewig. Palm upon knuckles,
Fingers over the cane head, he regards
Amusedly his own face in the crystal.
"Without my powdered curled peruke
I were but a man; so, I am a dandy.
For what was there to do, being no god
Burnished and strong, amorous of immortals,
But to escape this disappointing body
Punily erect, patched with scant hair,
Rank in its smell too,
By hiding it in silk and civet—adding to silver hair,
Pomp of vermilion heels?
What else, indeed, unless to drown
All naked, to drown all sense in wine.

"They thought my wit was all in waistcoats,
My epigrams pointed but with dainty tassels,
When every ribbon that my fingers tied
Protested with a fragile indolent disdain
A world exquisitely old and dull and vain.
So I gave them my jest—
Walking stark naked to the gaming room
Where the preened dandies leaned across their cards
Their pale long fingers spread among the cards.

They laughed: I did not laugh: so old
So pitiful, so brutal and so dark
The buffoonery. But the body's the jest of Another—
I make my obeisance.

Young Coatsworth has become
A naked glimmer on the lighted glass,
Fainter than the shimmer among rainy bees.

An old man lies propped on a bed.
Counting the candles of the empty glass—
An old man who has seen
His own youth walking in the room.

The window silk puffs with a winter gust,
And Coatsworth, *aetatis suae* XXV,
Flapped in gold braid crinkled in air-blue,
With inscrutable precision
Bows in a lady,
Who repeats the scene with graces of a marionette.

"Madam," he says, addressing her panniers,
"Your bodice is miraculously a double moonrise,
Your throat the traditional swan's white—
But fuller. Your lips an exciting cochineal.
But in truth, love is at best
A fashionable intrigue, an accompliced secret,
Unendurable without grated orris root.
Love remains to the proud mind
A ladder loosened from the brazen tower,
A furtive flight from the sentineled domain
Where self is utterly contained in self.
Though you ordered the death of a thousand roses,
I've caught the breath of a garden, where
No man has ever been, and the ripe fruit

Drops through the tarnished air
Unheeded, and yew trees are made peacocks.
I thank you for your horrible favours.
Adieu—"

The lady unravels to a ragged smoke:
Coatsworth darkens with blood like a satyr,
Blushes in a burnish on the mirror,
Burns and is gone.

The dry skull stretches regretful claws
And the points of the tapers twist and bend—
Sallow fingers of Jewish usurers.

A rapier flicks through the curtains
Like a needle of sunlight splintered on the sea.
Coatsworth presses before him,
Back to the fireplace, a panting stripling.
A jet of wet red spurts from the shirt front;
The youth sinks and dribbles in blood through the carpet.

"The end of such upstart heralds
As would bar my shield to the sinister."
The reflected visage is rigid,
Puckered thinly with wrinkles.
"What if I got my finger's trick,
Whether with rapiers or a puffing neck-cloth,
From a confectioner of Bath
Whose fastidious years were spent

Tracing on cakes sweet labyrinths of ice,
Squeezing pink fondant into petalled buds?
What that, overnight, through an open window,
He got me because a crooked pear tree
Climbed to the window ledge?
No man's to call me bastard.
And what's a murder more or less
Amid the inane fecundity of blood and sweat.
A barmaid and a groom repair the loss."

The dead youth has subsided in blood
Leaving the floor unsoiled.
Coatsworth has leapt through the silvered glass
Leaving its flames unspoiled.

His pallor stained by the rose-dimmed dusk,
An old man lies on a curtained bed,
Whimpering like a beggar in a wet loft
When the wind's found the cracks and the straw
is cold.

Coatsworth, now old, steps from the window folds
With a gesture consciously tragic;
Stands for a moment
Half Don Juan, half Childe Harold;
Then stalks, a magpie motley
Black, buff and silver, up to the mirror.
He regards the vain, brave fall
Of the surtout, the triple tied neck-cloth,
The bronze hair brushed as in busts of Nero—

Then with a posture almost Byronic
Confides in silence.

"Amid the bumpers, the scaffoldings, the ilex cones,
I have ever worn the scorn of death
With the careless grace of a boutonnière.
But let me be buried with a fiery choir;
A scarlet and lace processional of boys,
And priests too old to lift their stiffened folds
Too wise to hold their clouded incense as a prayer.
Tie up my chin lest I should smile.
And press into my hand my laurel cane
Where Daphne with blown crinkled hair
Feels the hard wood invade her silver thighs;
Leave me my snuff box for its musty yawn
And for its intricate cool ivory
Showing an April faun at his desires;
Probate my will, offer my house for rent.

"I had thought to find a languor, to attain
A gallant erudition in the snuff box and the cane;
To restore a tarnished splendour
Ceremonious as a stole,
Gorgeous like a vestment—yet urbane;
Between the opening and the closing of the doors
To have stood between the sconces, ripe in silk,
Ancestral laces falling to the sword;
Reflected in the parquetry, to dream
Of Giorgione in a tricorn, and high wigs
Powdered with palest silver, piled like clouds;

Of odorous mummied roses, grown dusty with a queen
Tender and slight and proud.

"But I have stood so long
Before so many mirrors, I'm afraid,
Afraid at last that I may be
A shadow of masks and rapiers between the girandoles
A satin phantom, gone when the wax is down."

He becomes a toothless grimace
Between the moveless cherubs, silver blown.

Under the lustered bed-dome, in the curtained dusk,
A throat moans—the sudden and lonely
Cry of one ridden by a nightmare,
Who wakes and finds it is no dream.

Old Coatsworth unravels from the bed clothes—
As ghost unwinding its buried linen,
And stands, toes clutched and indrawn,
Ridiculously muffled in linen ruffles;
Totters slowly to the glass
To find therein, grinning wide with terror,
The toothless mist of the last apparition.
Shrieking, he plucks a candle from its socket
And drives the double flame into the darkness.
Another, another, another,
Four tapers extinguish their windy stains

In a smear of wax on the mirror.
Another flame drops from a bony claw.
Like the drums of a defeat, a heart sounds.
And he peers at the dwindling face in the mirror—
The face of a dandy brought to a shroud.

Clutching the last tremulous candle
The old dandy sways,
Clings to the air,
And sinks in a slow movement of exhausted mirth.

The mirror is heavy with shadows
And a white candle spreads a film on the hearth-
stone.

The Death of an Efficiency Expert

Edgar's grandfather had studied Latin and Greek
And his father had studied Latin,
But Edgar studied only Spanish,
For commercial purposes—
Because he had been told that it was very valuable
In connection with South America.

Edgar did exceedingly well at college:
He won a ΦBK
And was active in Y. M. C. A. work.
One day, however, a devil tempted him.
It was as the time of a big religious revival:
Mr. Guthrie, the well-known evangelist,
Had just spent a week at the college
And set all the more callow of the students
To praying and repenting their sins;
Religion spread like a rash
Till the classes had to be suspended.
There had been nothing like it for an orgy
Since the club election parties.
At the final meeting of the week,
Mr. Guthrie made a gripping speech:
He told the young men, with tears in his eyes, that
there was nothing like confession

To purge away the dross of the soul and let Jesus
into the heart
And that they would all feel better men for it,
If they would get up right there and confess.
He said that the more people heard you confess,
The more effective your confession was.

So one freshman confessed to playing craps
And another to having drunk a cocktail,
And then a child-like football-player,
With a manly but unsteady voice,
Announced that he had spent the night with a girl
On the boat coming down from Albany,
When he was on his way home from Northfield,
From the big religious conference.
There was something in the reduction
Of this honest and enormous fellow
To the level of a frightened child
That affected Edgar unpleasantly,
Though he tried to struggle against it;
And then suddenly the devil appeared to him
In the form of a well dressed student
Whom he had never seen before.
"This makes me sick!" said the devil.
"If the godhoppers had their way,
They'd have us all like that."
And he turned and went away,
Leaving Edgar strangely uneasy.
He had at first intended to confess
That he had once neglected his Physics

To go to see Douglas Fairbanks, just before an examination;
But he didn't get around to it, somehow.
He convinced himself, however,
When the meeting was over,
That, disgusting as these things might seem,
They were really of a surgical cleanness,
Because a fine clean man like Mr. Guthrie,
With a blue suit and gold watch-chain and everything,
Dignified them by his straight-forward manliness
And his stern anxiety for saving
The meanest of human souls.

But, in spite of his interest in the Y. M. C. A.,
He did not go to China for mission work,
After his graduation from college;
Nor did he even go to South America,
In spite of having studied Spanish.
He obtained a position in a candy factory
At Newark, New Jersey—
A position in what was known as the Welfare Department.
As he first approached Newark on the train,
He was thrilled at the prospect of his work;
When he saw the huge dark-bulking factories,
That lay like great ships in the marsh
And seemed to dominate the world
With their implacable austerity,

He exulted at the thought of Industry,
So swollen and rapid a tide,
Sweeping the country along to Prosperity
On its mighty flood of Production;
And he felt some of the outwardly grim, but inwardly gay self-importance
Of the young Second Lieutenant who has just received his commission,
As he reflected that he now belonged
To the class who were chosen to direct it—
To speed up its processes by efficiency,
To marshal and control its workers.

Now, at the time when Edgar arrived to take up welfare work
In the Hutchins & Blotto Hygienic Candy Kitchens,
It happened that the whole works
Was undergoing reorganization,
On account of the Schlegemann-Applegate Electric Filler and Slicer,
Which had just been installed there.
Hitherto, the work of the Candy Kitchens
Had been largely done by hand:
One girl, for example,
Would cut off lengths of taffy,
While another dipped them in chocolate,
Thus producing caramels;
But, under the new system, practically everything
Was accomplished by machinery:

In the making of chocolate bars, for instance,
A large vat would be filled with paraffin,
Into which some chocolate and sugar
Would be automatically fed,
As well as a pint of formaldehyde
And a bushel of almond shells;
Then, when the ingredients in the vat
Had been boiled for a certain length of time,
It would be automatically tipped up
And the contents poured into little troughs,
Where they were hardened by a special cold-air process
And finally run through a guillotine,
Which chopped them into equal lengths and stamped them in enormous letters
With the legend HUTCHINS & BLOTTO.
This process was a great improvement
On any ever used before;
It more than quadrupled production.
All the operatives had to do was to watch the machine:
One girl would devote herself exclusively
To feeding the hoppers of the vat;
She was no longer obliged to trouble
About getting the proportions right:
The machine did all that for her;
Another simply watched the guillotine
To see that it was working accurately;
While a third checked up the finished products
And sorted out defective ones.

Edgar entered heart and soul, at once,
Into the spirit of this invention
And he assisted the efficiency expert
In organizing the works
So that half as many operatives as before
Could produce four times as much candy.
This was done by timing the fastest worker
And making all the rest live up to him;
Or, in some departments of the factory,
By the institution of piece-work,
Which, the welfare workers pointed out,
Enabled the employees to earn more:
Because, by this system, each one was paid for the individual amount of candy
He was able to make in a day
And was thus, as can readily be seen,
Kept enthusiastically at it
Pushing the work along.
There were many other measures taken, also,
For the welfare of the employees.
There was a special trained nurse, for example,
Who was sent to the homes of the workers
Who had failed to turn up for work
And alleged that they were sick;
She would visit such people at once
And, if they were really sick,
She would go away and leave them in peace;
And, if anybody were dying,
With an admirable delicacy,
She would take pains not to annoy him;

But if anybody said he was sick
And then turned out not to be sick,
She took such offence at his deceit
And his lack of loyalty to his employer
That she always went straight away
And informed the company.

But the welfare worker's chief task
Was to promote an *esprit de corps:*
He published a well-printed little paper
Devoted to the interests of the workers,
Which came out very strongly from the first
For loyalty to American institutions—
And, in case some of the ignorant foreigners
Might not understand these institutions,
It took pains to explain quite simply
That the chief of them was the time-clock;
And it made it quite clear that striking
Was a treasonable act.
There were also jolly picnics
In the bracing New Jersey marshes;
They were run off according to schedule
By the Welfare Department,
Who furnished the picnickers with little lists
Of the things they must not do—
Such as wandering too far away
Or leaving egg-shells on the grass.

And young Edgar, as I have said,
Entered heartily into the work:

Just as at college he had taken up the cause
Of the Y. M. C. A.,
And had preached the battle against vice and the life of service for Christ,
So now he put an earnest enthusiasm
Into the industrial religion
And devoted all his spiritual force
To the preaching, by precept and example,
Of the following admirable commandments:
Be sober, in order that your employer may have an efficient servant;
Be thrifty, in order that your employer may not have to pay you higher wages;
Be honest, in order that your employer may not lose money by you;
Be industrious, in order that your employer may become as rich as possible;
And, finally, be religious—
Be optimistic and pious,
So that, well satisfied with this life and hoping for a bonus in Heaven,
You may never be tempted to complain
Or to question economic arrangements.

But one day another devil
Appeared to Edgar,
Wearing respectable ready-made clothes
And a clean white collar,
So that Edgar should not suspect him.
"Would you be interested," inquired the devil,

"In beholding the naked human soul,
In examining with your own eyes its every hidden mystery,
In reading its every thought as easily as you can read an electric sign?"
(He spoke like an advertisement,
Because he was a crafty devil
And knew that this would be the surest way
Of winning Edgar's respect.)
But Edgar only took him for a book-agent
And tried to shut him off;
So the devil attacked him again with an even subtler cunning:
"You must not suppose that I am mad,
Or even a crank," he continued.
"I can actually do what I say I can,
By scientific methods.
It is all Science!"
And when Edgar heard that it was all Science,
He went with the devil at once.

"Let us begin with a simple type of soul," said the devil,
"A type you can easily understand.
Let us take one of the young girls
Who works in the Candy Kitchens here";
And he led Edgar casually to the operative
Who sorted out the defective chocolate bars.
"Put this little lens into your eye
And then watch her back," he said.

So Edgar did as he was told
And fixed his eye on the girl's back
And he found that, instead of a gingham dress,
He was gazing at a sort of grey pool—
Something between a tank at the aquarium
And a picture by Mr. Arthur Davies,
But it was greyer and more indeterminate
Than even Mr. Davies usually is—
Though there were some curious dark shapes,
Not unlike fish and sea-weed,
Or drifting disembodied spirits.
"Here, you see," began the devil,
In the respectable voice of a lecturer:
"Here, you see, we have the woman's soul:
There is very little colour in it:
It is fed for ten hours a day
By nothing but the room in which we find ourselves
And the employment of picking out chocolate bars
That are longer than the rest,
Outside of that, it is fed
By the Newark houses and streets."
"But surely," Edgar exclaimed,
"This is not the woman's whole soul!
Does she never have any amusements?
Has she never known a pure and selfless Love?
And has she no Religion?"
"That thing like a muddy purple pin-wheel,"
The devil explained politely,
"Is her passion for the movies.
But her chief amusement is to be seen

In that dark growth at the bottom,
Which will presently swell and burst
And change all the grey to black;
It is her festering hatred and anger
Against whatever it is
That keeps her inside this room
For ten hours a day.
After so many days of grey,
Even black is a desirable colour;
After so many chocolate bars,
A strike amounts to a lark.
And as for Love, you will find it
In those foul and murky patches
Which here thicken the grey;
You will find its freest expression
In the aphorisms, poems and sketches
Which appear in such profusion
On the walls of the women's lavatory.
But as for Religion," he concluded,
"You will look for it in vain."

"Scoundrel!" cried Edgar. "Liar!
You are defaming American womanhood!
Tar and feathering is too easy
For a traitor who talks like you!
You would make me believe that our honest girls,
As pure as any women in the world,
Are poisoned with filthy desires and contaminated
thoughts!—
And with our up-to-date Welfare Department

Doing everything in its power
To shield the good girls from corruption
And save the bad ones from themselves!
Furthermore, you are a Bolshevik,
An alien agitator!—
I can tell from your dark complexion.
You are preaching organization and treason;
You are probably a walking delegate!
You want to take the free and contented employees
And set them against their masters!
I shall have you deported to Russia
Or knocked on the head in the street!"
But the devil only disappeared,
With a harsh and metallic laugh,
In a puff of chlorine gas.

Edgar thought the whole incident a delusion
Brought on by overwork;
But the memory of it troubled him.
He felt that a kind of spell
Had been laid upon his eyes,
So that nothing seemed natural to him.
He grew to detest his office
And the very sight of the factories
And he avoided the eye of the employees
When he met them around the place.
One day as he came down to Newark
A strange depression possessed him;
The familiar landscape of the marshes,
Which had formerly thrilled him so splendidly

With its monuments to heroic enterprise
And unshakable prosperity,
Filled him now with an aching doubt
And a terrible foreboding.
He saw a country for ever tarnished with a dingy haze of dampness and smoke;
The swamp-grass was bleached by the autumn to an almost colourless yellow, with patches still feebly verdant and with stagnant pools corrupted to a vivider green;
And the whole of the vast dead meadow was strung with telephone wires, scarred across by muddy and foundering roads;
The one touch of colour and life was the series of huge board signs which advertised hotels and theatres; underclothes, bacon and ketchup; phonographs, fountain-pens, cigarettes and safety-razors; typewriters, letter-openers, umbrellas and licorice drops; and, not least, the Toothsome Chocolate Bars of Hutchins & Blotto, proclaimed with the face of an enormous girl, smiling like a shark.
Then came the world of the factories, like prodigious and sinister war-ships;
The excoriation of the rail-road tracks, bristling with cranes;
Low bare brick plants encased in tight bare walls of brick,
Above a straight black iron river where the ripples looked like flaws;

Yards cluttered with metallic refuse: exact piles of rusty pipe; congeries of iron octopus-trunks and nondescript lopped-off tentacles.

And there were human habitations, like a flimsier sort of debris:

Feeble-looking houses, unpainted and grey, which, but for ragged lines of clothes, that flung their poor reds and whites to dry in the tainted air, would have seemed the sea-faded wrecks of a faded monotonous sea;

And at last a broad body of water, his familiar Newark Bay, perfectly black and still, shiny and corrupt with oil,

Where the hulk of a horrible old steam-boat, as black as the water itself, had been slowly rotting and sinking through the stagnancy of years and now showed only its warped upper deck and its rickety blackened wheel.

There were more factories here, jammed stiflingly together:

Small factories and machine-shops pressed close on either side, seemed to shut him in like a prison, crowd blankly against his view, seemed to sterilize his soul with their barrenness and oppress it with their bulk:

Pattern-makers and electroplaters, manufacturers of castings and blow-pipes, of paints and mattresses and chemicals.

There was business going on everywhere; he knew how much work was being done; he recognized

the prosperity represented by the cheap shops and solid buildings;
But in the dirtiness of the streets, the dull colours of the city, the harshness of human works indifferent to cleanness and brightness, the overwhelming impression of life grown heavy and sordid and empty behind grudging dusty windows, in thousands of brick-walled rooms,
He felt, for the first time, that Death
Was blackening and rotting the city,
As it had done to that wretched old steam-boat, which no one had thought to save.

At the dingy brick Newark station,
He descended in painful reflection
And began to walk to his office
Through hard, blank-sided streets;
But devils pressed thick about him,
Waylaying him as he walked.
One came in the guise of the girl
Of whose soul he had seen an X-ray;
But now she froze his blood
With green phosphorescent eyes.
"Ah, hypocrite and fool!" she cried.
"Will you never find yourself out?
Will you never cease to harass and drive us
And to tell us you are trying to benefit us?—
To pretend that you are doing on our account
What is really done on your account?
Do you suppose we have ever been fooled

Or done anything but hate you for it?
All the gaudy words that you give us
With your picnics and papers and nurses
Can never deceive our muscles,
Which you have turned into silly machines,
Nor our racked and exhausted nerves
Nor our offended human souls!"

And a second devil appeared
In the semblance of a savant.
He looked a little like Mr. Bertrand Russell,
Whom Edgar had once heard lecture on politics,
Having gone under the impression
That Mr. Russell was going to speak
On the relation of philosophy to the calculus of propositions.
The figure was surrounded with a radiance
Which filled Edgar with a strange awe:
It was white and steady and calm and extraordinarily limpid,
And made the black street look as black
As if he had brought Hell with him,
And, as he spoke, it seemed to Edgar
That he was speaking with as much detachment
As if he were describing the causes for the decay of the Roman Empire.
"The capitalist state," he began,
As if he were reading from a book
"Cannot last for the following reason:
The issue involved is not really one of shorter

hours and higher pay: it is a democratic issue similar to the one on which feudalism split at the end of the XVIIIth century. The employers may carry paternalism to its furthest possible limit, but they will never in this way be able to cure the grievance which their employees have against them; for no amount of welfare work or of sliding scales can ever, in the long run, convince the employees that they are not being exploited. And from what we know of humanity, we cannot expect of men in power that they should willingly do anything else but exploit their kind.

The democratic claim of the workers to control the conditions of their work will inevitably result in some form of industrial democracy. This may, of course, prove a disappointment, like republican democracy; but at least the bourgeois republic had this advantage over the monarchy: it meant that the people gained certain safeguards which they had not had before: they were able to impeach the President or, at least, refuse to re-elect him, where they could not have rid themselves of a king by anything short of violence.

We need precisely similar safeguards in the industrialism which has swallowed up the old Republic: the employee cannot rid himself of his boss by anything short of a bomb. Under

a system of Guild Socialism or whatever arrangement is adopted, it is, of course, conceivable that the employee might be as badly fleeced as before, but, at least, like the voter in the republic, he would think that he controlled his destiny and be comfortable in the assurance that he was represented in the management.

For these reasons, it is evident that, unless the employers show more foresight than they seem capable of doing, the struggle between capitalist and worker is certain to become more and more acute and, as, in this country particularly, it is neglected by professional politics, it will probably end in a revolution of more or less violence. After all, we cannot expect the capitalists to dispossess themselves; they will hang on to the last moment; while the liberal propaganda of people like myself will probably turn out to be as powerless to prevent the disaster as the propaganda of Voltaire and the statesmanship of Turgot were to forestall the French Revolution. People like me will probably, in fact, be hunted down as reactionaries, as Condorcet was by the Terror. The bitterness of the oppressed may prove as cruel as the brutality of the oppressors.

I am, therefore, I may say frankly, not enthusiastic about the prospect, but I don't know who is going to change it: there is a democratic is-

sue at stake which makes industrial peace impossible and which renders, I may perhaps add, your welfare work ridiculous."
And he disappeared in a glow, like a clear dawn in March.

And as Edgar stood chilled to the bone,
Unable to lift a foot,
A third apparition appeared—
A Parisian pastry-cook—
And there shone about him the gentle air of the Ile-de-France.
"I sell pastry every spring," he announced,
"At a shop on the Boulevard.
I open a booth on the street
So that it is easy to buy as you pass.
It is impossible to keep from buying,
Once you have beheld these cakes,
That embody so much fancy
And so much taste:
The Napoleons are fragile and crisp;
The éclairs are filled with cool cream;
There are cream-puffs studded with cherries and containing delightful surprises.
To eat them is to love life better
And to honour the human spirit,
Which is seen no less in these cakes
Than in the panes of the Sainte-Chappelle.
Have you created anything comparable to them?
You have nothing but chocolate bars,

Which soften and grow horribly soggy on the
station stands in summer,
Which you are obliged to disfigure public places
and even the freshness of your country-side
With garish and abominable signs
In order to sell at all!
And yet these little cakes of mine
Are all made with my hands
And I can perform every phase of the process
From the first mixing of the dough,
Instead of knowing only one detail
Beyond which I am helpless!"
And he vanished like a meringue
That seems to melt on the tongue.

But Edgar stood long in dumbness,
Bewildered and terrified,
And then, at last, cried out
In horror and in pain:
"Oh, what have I done that my soul
Should thus be clouded and torn?
Why, O devils, do you torment me?
Why do you seek to destroy me?
All my life I have tried to behave
Like a good American and a Christian.
I have never spared myself
In the accomplishment of good works.
I have always done as well as I could
What I believed to be most worth doing."
And then a voice replied

Which excited him, yet filled him with fear:
"Have you ever really believed?
Was it devils who suggested your doubts?
They were sent to rescue your soul and not to
destroy it—
For they are the servants of Lucifer,
Who has taken over Apollo's job!"

A frenzy seized upon Edgar—
A frenzy of knowledge and despair:
He saw about him the walls of jails,
Where men were being wasted and racked;
Their hardness pressed flat on his heart;
Their edges ground grooves in his brain—
And over everything thickened the darkness
That made him know he was in Hell.

He rushed headlong towards his Plant
In a panic to escape that prison;
The façade of the Candy Kitchens
Ate him up and left no trace.
Once within, like a dazed self-immolant at the altar
of some savage god.
He cast himself into the Schlegemann-Applegate
Electric Filler and Slicer—
Which made him into chocolate bars
With an admirable precision.

The Funeral of an Undertaker

I

Shrunken by life to a hard grin,
Alone upon an unkempt bed,
The man whose labouring years had been
A watch with death himself lay dead.

His eyes stared at the ceiling; the chin
Had fallen; one sleeveless arm was thrown
Limply across the bed, the skin
Pulled thin to fit each finger bone.

Though all men knew that he was dead
No waxlight burned beside his bed.

And no one from the village came
With black boards for a coffin frame.

No housewife came to bind his mouth
With a smooth strip of linen cloth.

No prayer was said, and no one swung
The bell rope where the church bell hung.

II

Year after year the villagers had watched

The gutters lose their evening stains,
The skies descend and the grey dusk
Hang cobwebs on the window panes,
And by a yellowing street lamp seen
A hurrying coat of blistered green
Clutched by one hand, meagre and blotched
With colourless spots like a bad husk,
A shabby hat crushed low as if
To mask the eye they had not seen—
And pressed upon the sill and said:
"So the old buzzard's got a whiff,
He'll soon be pecking at the dead."
And some of them there were that leaned
Hard on the window panes and turned
Sallow as though he were the fiend
And they were souls which he had earned.
None knew how long since he began—
How many nights since first he held
A dripping candle to lidless eyes
And peering let the hot wax fall
On lips composed for burial.
None knew how long since he began
To probe the dust heaps of the spirit
And finger dusty histories;
But slowly this washer of the dead discerned
What droll, half-earnest clowns inherit
The masked and tragic rôle of man.
Not even the child who heard his tread
Scuffling the autumn leaves and rain
Could guess what unpersuadable pities

Drove him forth to walk the rain,
Or how this lonely washer of the dead
Was by his own deep passion comforted,
Until he had grown old as ancient cities
That have looked so many times upon their slain.

Keeping no thought of slackened blood,
Less vigorous bone or tardy mind,
He watched a vain and dwarfish brood
Chatter at tasks which chance assigned,
Seeking in toil what poets scarcely find
Among the shadows of the immortal wood.
And always at the one moment when
His despised craft had power on men
He sought with patient pitiless care,
With visible wit, to make aware
What puffed, unprofitable things had borne
His bitter and compassionate scorn.

With starved horse and bare hearse he gave
The poor in spirit to the grave;
And nailed the comfortably good
In coffins of worm-eaten wood;
He showed the niggardly and mean
By hiding under ropes of green,
Small gaudy flowers and bits of vine
Their yellow coffins of cheap pine.
With hearse and hack on polished hack,
Tacky with trappings of crimped black,
He set the opulent and loud

Before the dumb, lip-fallen crowd.
But those who'd looked in bewilderment on
The unintelligible sun,
Who might have leapt with a cry and bled
Their youth out on a barricade;
All those whose frustrate hearts had cried
For braver beauty, and so died,
Crumpled and dry, broken like a clod
Too many heels have trod,—
To these a slow processional
Was given,—a silver drooping pall,
Falling in sheeny folds which shifted
Stiffly as violent horses lifted
Black crests of thick plumes and drew
The dim pomp to the grave.

But few
He found among his kith and neighbours
Who earned such honour of his labours:
Some nine there were and of these five
He'd known but slightly when alive.

So he had lived, tormented, proud
As a poet, hated by the crowd
That paunched and bred and plied a trade,
Kept small accounts and sometimes prayed
To an old god with untrimmed beard
Who kept accounts and slily peered
Into the things too slily done;
Who made the moon and trimmed the sun.

And all these when they heard him dead,
Shrugged their bones and sniffed and said,
"Good riddance to the village, then;
He was a pest to honest men."

So now he lay, a poor, untended
Wrack of shrunk skin and jointless bone,
The man whose endless task was ended,
Whose anguish stifled like a groan.

All day a small insistent clock
Ticked and slid to the hours' mark
And rattling to a rusty shock
Hour by hour brought on the dark.

And with the dark a rat came out
And snuffed among stale bacon rinds
And chunks of bread; a leaking spout
Trickled; a gust flopped in the blinds.

And in the dark the dead man sprawled
Like one who'd stretched a bloody reign
And in his violent hour had called
Upon the household guards in vain.

III

The night is thin. The air is crisp,
For the spring is scarcely felt at night.
The air is still with a windy lisp

Where the first leaves in the thicket are.
The moon is misty as a star,
But the rounded stones are washed with white
And a chance spade glints with steely light.

There is no sound at the graveyard's edge
Save for the rustling hornbeam hedge;
But something shivers beneath the soil
As when a mole is at his toil;
Something struggles under the ground,
Thrusts the earth to a gritty mound,
Squirms and flutters, and suddenly there
Is a frail wisp upon the air,
Like the blue smoke of sodden leaves
Which children burn on autumn eves;
It writhes and gathers, shifts and breaks,
Thickens with colour, waves and takes
The semblance of a man long buried,
Old before death, his gaunt cheeks serried
With furrows where the rain has lain.
Another mound of grave-loam stirred;
A second gathered shape; a third,
Then five dead men, and one dead woman,
Cracking the ground at an unheard summon,
Out of the shapeless air unravel.
They glide without feet along the gravel
Between black borders of clipped box,
Brush through the wicket's spikes and locks,
Glide to the church, where no one tolls
Except for pay for dead men's souls;

Past the church and through the streets
Where smug wives snore between clean sheets
With every window shut and barred
And a restless watchdog in the yard.
Then at a word no lip had uttered
Into the dead man's house they fluttered
And there for a waiting moment stood
Like panting things of bone and blood,
And stared at the blind shape which there
Cluttered the green distorted square
The late moon in the window made.

For these of all whom he had laid
In the obscure and level earth,
These only he had thought of worth.
These alone had sought to enmesh
Ecstasy in the unholding flesh,
Or with stretched throats had stood
While drums and scarlet in the blood
Arrayed a triumph for the mind,
When raggedness or cold assigned
Their aching arms to swinging slops
To pigs or storing a farmer's crops;
And waking to the white rain
Pecking at the shingle roof had lain
Alone and awake, while with young breath
Through love of life they cried for death.
And these now from the grave were come,
In dumb and yearning shapes were come
To bear the dead man to his grave.

Four abrupt white tapers wave
At the four corners of the bed.
A sudden spectral gesture moulds
The hands to quiet, the feet to stone;
And circling shadows compose the dead
On a low bier of forgotten boards;
The moonlight through the bleared panes sifted
Falls on a pall of rigid folds
And tassels threaded with tarnished cords.
Then with a light of tapers lifted,
Shuffling as if to a monotone,
Out of the room, the narrow door—
Nodding beneath the lintel's beam—
The dumb, black-leaning phantoms bore
Their burden; and, as if seen through a stream,
Went wavering over the pavement stones,
Rocking as if their shoulders shook
Under the confused weight of bones.
No shutter's chink widened to look
With a quickened eye where in the drowned
Colour and glimmer of thin moonshine
The corpse-bearers shuddered without sound.
No window gaped for the watchdog's whine
As with its load the processional
Flickered by silent door and wall,
House by house, to the street's verge,
Where from a shadow against a light
It dwindled to shadow and merged
Into the phantasmal night.

The Death of a Soldier

Henry had a magnificent thrill at the Hâvre rest-camp. The dirty chicken-wire bunks of the French barracks were the first authentic sign he had seen of the squalour of the war. Everything in America had been adequate and new, but here the grasp had slipped; the war was gaining on them. The filthiness of these old sheds, where for three years soldiers had been coming and going, gave him a ghastly sinking of the heart, to which lurid rumours added. It seemed that things were very desperate and they were going straight to the front; it seemed that they were going to be brigaded with the French. These wholly unfounded statements, born of the excitement of the moment, had at once been accepted as well-established fact and everybody was telling everybody else about them with a grimness not devoid of gusto.

But when he went out of doors, he was exhilarated by the November sunshine, which brought out the reds and blues and khakis of the passing uniforms and lent splendour even to the barracks. He watched the strange crowd with wonder. The English officers stalked along in glittering smartness; they did not regard the rest of the world and

hardly spoke to each other. The French *poilus* seemed tired and untidy and ridiculousy small. Here and there one saw an American officer, very solemn and a little self-conscious of the freshness of his uniform. He would have thought it all rather gay if he had not been in the Army and felt always the oppression of being handled like a thing without will. They could do absolutely anything they liked with him; he had felt that in the barracks as he had never felt it before. They could tell him to go to more horrible places than barracks and he would have to go and stay there. And he was dismayed to find how much the edge was taken off his enjoyment by the iron unshakable sense that he was not his own master. Still, he felt keen pride at being there. This was the World War! These were the things you saw pictures of in the American Sunday papers!—And how much he had grown up since he first went to camp in June!

He had enlisted at eighteen on his graduation from High School. "The young men and women who go out into the world this spring," the Superintendent had said in his Commencement address, "have an opportunity for glory such as no other class has had. It has fallen to their lot—it becomes their inestimable privilege—to vindicate before the world the fair name of America! Nothing grieves me more at this moment than the fact that I am not young enough to bear arms myself and

I envy you young men with all my heart for the Great Adventure that is before you." The Minister had said in church: "Take up the sword for Christ! The German Antichrist—the Ambassador of Hell—has ravished France and Belgium and, unless we smite it first, will hold bleeding in its talons our own dear land! The Hun must be made to drink the blood he has ruthlessly spilled! He must suffer every torture and privation he has inflicted on the innocent! We are fighting not only for Democracy but for *Christianity!* 'Vengeance is mine!' saith the Lord!" And Henry, walking alone in scented dusks of June, had decided that even his uncle's real estate business in New Bedford was far too flat a way to begin the world.

The first weeks of his training had disappointed him a little. After the sober piety of his home, the life of the barracks shocked him. Not even when he went to High School had he heard such language as that; but, since that was the language of the Army, he would of course have to learn it and he had soon mastered a vocabulary that clashed with his innocent eyes. In a month he had learned all the other things, too, that are fundamental for a soldier: the habit of not making plans and surrendering the direction of his life; the right formula in morose complaining when he was given anything to do; how to produce the impression of working when he was not working, but, when he did work, how to work harmoniously with anybody; self-re-

pression in the presence of officers and the acceptance of a lower valuation of himself as a Private in the Army than as a student at High School and the son of a respectable farmer; ability to enjoy and get on with any sort of man and inability to consider any woman except in one simple relation.

Now, he felt, he was really almost a man. He had discovered with excitement that the taboos of home need not be binding. You could curse like a baggage-man if you wanted to, without its doing any harm; and the men who swore and drank most he found the most amusing of all: they seemed to have more fun in them, more imagination than the others, and they had had more adventures. As long as he had been encamped near home, to be sure, he had left the whores alone, but when he should get to France—well, everybody knew what France was! And you didn't take much risk because the Government would disinfect you afterwards.—In the States he hadn't been able to drink except furtively and it was with a thrill of adventure and freedom that he went into the English Y. M. C. A. and had beer among the absurd voices of the English soldiers. If only he could get rid of that damn cold that he had caught on the ship and from sleeping on the ground at Southhampton, he would be pretty well satisfied, he thought. . . .

That night he was horribly tired and had a sore throat and a headache and he tried to get to sleep early in the barracks; but there were a lot of people

drunk who kept yelling and singing till midnight. And after they had subsided, everybody began to cough; it was like the barking and roaring of a menagerie. "Sounds like a goddam T. B. ward!" said somebody. Then all the lights were suddenly turned on and raucous voices shouted: "All out!" It was an artillery company that was leaving at four in the morning. They swore sullen oaths like heavy blows. Then some one began to sing an endless obscene song, which afforded them some relief by allowing them to join in the chorus. When they had finally gone and the lights were out again, the November fog leaked in through the paneless windows and felt for his legs through the blankets with chill fingers. He was thankful for the chicken-wire, anyway, he told himself, because, even though it was dirty and no warmer than sleeping on the wind, it was luxurious after the wet ground he had had in England. And at the rest-camp he had met men who had told him about sleeping in stables on dung-heaps. Well, that was what he'd soon be doing, too! He wondered where he would be at this time next week. . . .

The next day, it was their turn to leave at four in the morning. He could hardly go to sleep for thinking how he would have to jump up quickly and get into his pack; he kept waking up and thinking the Sergeant had called and when the Sergeant did call, it found him nervously awake. He tore himself out of his blankets, buttoned his breeches

hurriedly and put on his blouse and coat, then spread out the blankets on the muddy floor where the men had been spitting all night. He struggled into his pack, fumbling in desperate haste—you were always afraid the command would come before you were ready—and, holding his rifle and leaning against the wall, fell into a sort of doze. His throat was so sore that when he swallowed it seemed to have a sharp knife in it.

"All out! Fall in!" bawled the sergeant.

They stumbled out into the night and presently found themselves in formation. An officer appeared and made them stand at attention, then disappeared and left them there. After they had stood at attention for fifteen minutes, the Sergeant gave them "At ease."—"What the hell does he care?" said somebody. "He sleeps warm, with comforters and everything. I seen their billets yesterday." At the end of an hour, the officer reappeared and gave them the command to march.

When they had left the camp, they found themselves confronted with a blank darkness thickened by the fog. Only here and there, as they proceeded, was the road illumined by a ghastly greenish light from a feeble street-lamp with a blackened top.

At last, they arrived at a railway track where a pygmy unlighted train was puffing under its breath. When they had stood there half an hour, they were ordered to get into the box-cars. The Captain, made a little self-conscious by knowing the command

would be a shock, delivered it with extra harshness. They clambered up in deadly silence. Then some one had the courage to begin cursing: "Just like a lotta goddam cows!" he muttered and the car was filled with bitter growls.

They found by falling over them that there were four benches in the car, two at each end and parallel with the sides, leaving a clear space in the middle from one side-door to the other. They threw down their packs in a heap in this central space and ranged themselves on the benches, which proved to be so narrow that they could neither sit nor lie on them without a constant effort of bracing. Everybody felt angry and ill and they began to quarrel among themselves. Some one had made out and explained the sign on the outside: *"Hommes 40 Chevaux (en long) 8."* It was the final wound to self-respect, the last indignity of the Army, which, although the fact was plain enough, had never before confessed that it put American soldiers on a level with animals! A universal complaint arose. "Aw, this ain't nothin'!" said a voice. "Wait till yuh get to the trenches. Then you'll wish you could set down in a box-car, what *I* mean!"

The train waited there till dawn, shifting backward and forward now and then, with much bumping and creaking. Everybody cursed the French railroads: "Hell, they ain't got no real railroads in this goddam country!" Then they seemed to be starting and got as far as a station, but only to back

up again and wait for another hour. At last the train seemed to pull itself together and set out half-heartedly, as if willing at any moment to abandon the struggle. France revealed itself as a grey and desolate country where everything was either marsh or mud. The towns were all miserable-looking and exactly alike: dull red roofs and yellow walls with washed-out streets between. The country consisted mostly of barren fields and dismal woods, inhabited by unfamiliar birds, and there were endless lines of poplar skeletons in whose fishbone-like branches the mistletoe clumps were lodged like enormous nests. And everything was wet, saturated with fog and rain. The men themselves were wet. It had been at least a week since they had been really dry.—So this was Europe!

As the morning wore on they began to get hungry, but the supplies were in the last car and they had not been provided with emergency rations. When the train would falter to a stop in the midst of some rain-soaked wilderness the whole company would yell for food—"When do we EAT?"—but no food ever came.

"Say, you're sick, aincha?" said a man next to Henry. "You better lay down."

"There ain't any place," he answered; the central space was already full.

"Why didun yuh go to Sick-Call at Hayver?"

"I did, but he only gave me a CC pill."

"Goddam ol' horse-doctor! These here Army

doctors dono nothin'. Here, you better take the corner seat so's you can lay up against the wall."

Henry changed places with him and was very grateful for the corner. He tried to relax as much as he could without slipping off the seat. He shut his eyes and tried to forget the acute oppression of his headache and the inescapable cold in his legs. The jouncing of the train was like crockery broken on his head; the oaths and coarse words, senselessly, endlessly repeated, like something less than human speech, pounded dully against his brain like the regular blows of a hammer. He took refuge infinitely far inside him, putting himself back home.

The images were diminished in size and concentrated in intensity, like something sharply focussed through a telescope; the wood-fire in the sitting-room gave him sharp satisfaction; the pitcher of water in the dining-room was too delicious to be believed—he felt that he could drink it with fierce passion. He put himself in bed on a Sunday morning under warm blankets and a "goose-chase" quilt; the gay patches of the quilt had a familiar security; he could remember that when he was little he had thought of them as alive. The square-paned window was up and he could see the great smooth contours of the hill-side gleaming with snow, the horizon as clear and bare as the room in which he had slept. In a minute or two his mother would come and call him curtly; then he would have to get up and dress right away; because no extra allowances

were made for Sunday morning breakfast. He would dread setting his bare feet on the cold uncarpeted floor and would lie staring at the flowered wash-stand set and the signing of the Declaration in a splotched print above it. But oh! how warm it was with your feet and legs in bed! . . . Presently he fell asleep, but only to jerk himself into wakefulness when he began to lose his purchase on the seat.

They stopped at a red-tile-roofed station late in the afternoon and everybody was allowed to get out. Having had no food for twenty-four hours, they fell upon the buffet and cleaned it up. Everybody got wine, which, tart and clear, brought deliciously to the bewildered men their first real taste of the country. Everybody was laughing and joking; a faint sun had appeared. One of the young Lieutenants offered to supply anybody who needed it with money to buy wine and had dispensed a great quantity of francs when the Commanding Officer, a conscientious Regular Army man who was zealous to forestall "unsoldierly conduct," put a brusque stop to the charity by ordering that no more wine should be bought.

When the train jolted on again, morale had enormously risen. With the wine aboard it became possible to enjoy the thing as a lark. If the French built toy railroads that "didn't go no faster'n a horse an' buggy," was that any reason why they should forget that they were the American Expeditionary Force, come over to kill the Kaiser?—

Everybody fell over Henry, who had taken the time when the car was empty to construct a bed of packs; but the wine made him feel better and he minded things less.

"Shut that goddam door! It's cold!"

"Aw, get away from it if yuh don't like it. We wanta see the world! 'Join the Army and See the World!' Christ, I could see more than this on the old Pontiac trolley-line!"

"Jesus Christ! I can't say much for this wine. Jest like a lotta goddam sour grape-juice!"

"Why, Christ, didunja get any brandy? They had brandy there, too. . . . Why, you —— bastard! of course they had brandy! Don't try to tell me they didun have no brandy! Didun Dicky get some?"

"Why Chur-rist! If I'da known that, I would-una bought all this here goddam red ink! It ain't no good to drink!"

"Why, I find it very stimulating," chirped a professional male nurse of the Sanitary Detachment, a bland, bald-headed man with the voice and manners of a shop-girl. He had had two bottles of his own wine and as much as he could get of other people's and was now softly singing *My Old Kentucky Home* over and over to himself.

"Say, look here! I can't supply the whole goddam company with brandy!" said the man who had some.

"Who's askin' yuh tuh sply the whole goddam

compny with brandy? I only ast yuh fer a drop!" demanded one of the messmen, who was getting more and more quarrelsome.

"Now, I'm all set," said the man who had just got the brandy. "All I want's a woman."

"It's too goddam bad we coulduna had some wild women along. That's what I come to France for."

"One good old night in the Arcade, eh?" suggested a middle-aged man, who claimed to be a lawyer in civil life.

"I wouldun give a good goddam fer the Arcade!" shouted the messman so loud that he could be heard above the hideous rattle of the cars and the uproar of everybody talking at once. ("Sit down, you big bastard!" "Lay down and go to sleep!")

"I tell you," continued the lawyer, "in the good old days when I was at Law School we used to set out on the front stoop and hail 'em in from the street. We used to ask 'em just to come in for a minute, but it was very seldom they ever got out again that night, what *I* mean!"

"Say, this guy's sick," said a man near Henry. "Why doncha move over and lettum lay out?"

"What did you say?" inquired the nurse.

"Aw, Jesus Christ! how many times do yuh want me to say it? Get over and let this guy lay down!"

"I can't move over any further. There's no more room. He oughtn't to lay right next to the open door, anyway! I think it's perfectly terrible!

The idea of letting a poor boy lay around like this when he's sick!"

"Well, that night," continued the lawyer with unflagging zest, (Henry could not escape that persistent voice; the others could be forgotten as dull amorphous sounds, but this one was so distinct and near that it would not blur) "we had so much to start with that Jack he just passes out before dinner's over and Flo says she's going out to look after-um. And that left me and Genevieve all alone. By and by *she* gets pale and pitches forward on the table and breaks a couple of glasses and I had just about time to get her to the couch when Jesus Christ! I loses my own lunch right in the cracked-ice pail. I didn't come to till about six the next morning and then I looks over at Genevieve and she was just the colour of a bum oyster. 'Well, Genevieve,' I says, 'I guess we don't want to do anything now, do we?' And she rolls her eyes over at me and says: "No! I guess we don't!"

Twilight had erased the faded countryside and the damp autumn air had become sharp. The train kept slowing up and stopping as if it had lost its way. The open sides of the car brought the country all too close to them; they might almost as well have been down among those wet thickets and those cold little streams. The sight-seers were finally prevailed upon to close the doors. But Henry did not feel the cold so much now and was no longer conscious of the delay; the only things he wanted

were water and to be able to breathe more easily. He had emptied his own canteen and then had disliked to ask for too much from his neighbours', but now he had reached a point where thirst had overcome reluctance and he was willing to take all they would give him. His head thumped like a dynamo with a hot ponderous throbbing. His breath came terribly hard and had begun to make a hoarse rasping sound. . . .

There was a dazzling light in his face; he turned his head to avoid it. Then somebody was shaking him out of his stupor. Distant voices: "What's the matter with yuh?—What's the matter with him?" "I think he's got a fever, sir. If there was an extra place in one of the regular cars—" "What's the matter with yuh? Cantcha hear I'm talkin' to yuh?"

"Got a cold," murmured Henry.

"Let me see your tongue. Say 'Ah.' Bowels all right?"

"If there was room in one of the regular cars, sir—" the Sergeant suggested again.

"Well, there isn't!" the Lieutenant cut him short. A former physician at Police Headquarters, he had learned that "all two-thirds of 'em need is a good swift kick."

He shook the messman, who was the nearest human item in the confused mound of packs and human bodies and commanded him to get up. Some of the men prodded him and helped him, swearing, to his

feet while others undid a blanket-roll and made a sort of bed on the floor.

"Just keep him warm," said the Lieutenant, when he had finished scolding the messman for disrespect. "I'll give him something when we get there." He jumped down and the train started.

"Aw, I bet there's lotsa room up there," said somebody. "They've got all the room they want, with plush seats and everything!"

"It's different with a well guy, but when a guy's sick like that, why Jesus Christ! they might show a little consideration."

And the Sergeant added: "He's just as kind and gentle as a crocodile, that bird is!"

"I never heard of such a thing!" complained the nurse, who had not said a word when the doctor was there and who had more room now that Henry was moved. "I've had professional experience, but they won't listen to me."

"Now, where am I gonta lay?" roared the messman. "Sweet Jesus! Do yuh think I'm gonta stand up all night?"

"You can lay along the roof," suggested somebody.

"Well, d'ye know what you can do?" bawled the other and told him what he could do.

"Shut up, Striker, and go to sleep! Cantcha see the guy's sick?"

"Well, Jesus Christ! he don't hafta be sick, does he?"

"Well, he's sick?"

"Well, he don't hafta be sick, does he?"

"Yes!"

"Well, he's outa luck!"

"Now, look here, fellows!" began a young man, seizing upon the opportunity to indulge a taste for eloquence. "There's a man sick in this car and we ought to try to make it comfortable for him, just like what we'd do if it was ourselves that was sick. My opinion is that if we haven't got enough consideration to give him a place to lay down in we don't deserve to bear the name of American soldiers—"

"Aw, what the hell yuh talkin' about?" bellowed Striker. "He's got a place to lay down in, ain't he? If a man's sick I'll get up and give him a place to lay down in, but what I can't stand is this here goddam High School stuff!"

"Shut up, yuh big bastard!" "Shut up, both of yuh!" "Speech! Speech!" "Give us a recitation, Shorty!"—And Shorty, already on his feet, gave them *Barbara Frietchie, The Face Upon the Barroom Floor, The Cremation of Sam M'Gee,* a series of ribald limericks and finally *Crossing the Bar,* described as "the dying words of Lord Tennyson." Then they all became hilarious and sang *Where do we go from here?* and *The Bastard King of England.* And when the singing was over and drowziness had made them quiet, the enthusiastic lawyer, who had never halted his narrative, was

heard proceeding to a climax: "But finally I decided that I'd had enough of that and I thought I'd get me a nice girl to go with all the time. So I did —a waitress in Schwartz's she was—and I went with her regular, going kinda easy at first—I thought she was all right, see?—and then, goddam it! what did she do but hand me the prettiest little package I ever had in my life!"

The train stopped at a large station and nearly every one got out to warm himself by walking up and down and drinking the coffee and cognac which some genial chirping French soldiers were ladling out from a pail.

"We've got a sick man in our car, sir," said the Sergeant to a mild little Lieutenant of the Medical Corps, who had asked him how they were making out.

"Let me see him," suggested the Lieutenant.

"He's pretty sick, I'm afraid," he said when he had examined Henry. "He oughtn't to be here at all. I wonder if we couldn't put him in one of those ambulances and have him sent to a hospital. I'll see what I can do."

He found his Commanding Officer scowling at the smiling and unconscious French soldiers who were dispensing bitter coffee to the eager Americans. The Major had tasted the cognac and was standing stiffly with the cup in his hand, mute with moral indignation.

In civilian life, this Lieutenant was a bacteriol-

ogist, who pursued his work with a high enthusiasm, scientific and humanitarian, and he therefore rarely felt at home in the company of doctors; he was a gentleman, besides, and had never got used to military manners. When the Major eyed him in silence, he began to sound apologetic, and the Major was not impressed. "They've all got colds," he said and threw out the tainted coffee in his cup with a gesture of contempt. "Lieutenant Forbes has seen him. That's all that can be done."

"It's pneumonia, I'm quite sure."

"Well, we ought to be in tomorrow. He can be attended to then. I shouldn't like to let a man go like this unless it were absolutely necessary. I should like to arrive there with every man, if possible."

"But would you mind looking at him yourself?" He began to feel helpless; the Major thought him unmilitary.

Just then the train tooted and began to back a little. "Well, it's too late now," said the Major. "We must get aboard. I'll see about it at the next stop."

They reached the next stop at about three in the morning and the Major was persuaded to look at Henry and send him off in an ambulance; it seemed that there was a Base Hospital nearby.

"Now please be sure to drive very slowly, won't you?" begged the Lieutenant of the ambulance driver; (he had never been able to give a command

properly.) "It may make a great deal of difference, you know, because he's got pneumonia and the jolting might make him worse."

"Yes, sir," promised the driver; but as soon as he got beyond the town he began winding up the smooth straight road like a spool of tape. It had been announced that the train of wounded he had been waiting for would not arrive till morning and his mind was full of the plump charms of a certain café *patronne,* whose husband had just left for the front.—The rush of the car drowned out Henry's no less harsh and mechanical breathing. . . .

There was a little piece of cotton in his throat; he thought if he could only get that out he would be all right. He coughed and coughed and coughed but he couldn't dislodge it. He remarked on this fact to the Sergeant and later to his sister, who, it seemed, were both there. Then he found that he was being horribly shaken up. "This is the damnedest straw-ride I was ever on," he said. "I don't call this no fun. Straw-ride without any straw!". . . But the train was slowing down; they would have to get out and march; it was eight miles to the camp. He must be able to put his hand on his pack and rifle in an instant. He supposed that he'd be able to get into his pack all right, though he didn't feel very well. That first moment when you heaved it up and wrenched it on to your shoulders was agonizingly hard, but after that no doubt he would find that he could get around. They would all fall

in and right-dress, jostling each other in the dark. . . . Ah, the train was going to stop. He reached for his rifle. Where the hell was it? "Are you going to stop here, Sergeant?" . . . Evidently not. The train was going faster again. They ought to get there in no time, at this rate! . . . "We used to sit out on the front stoop," he said, "and hail 'em in from the street. And I bet very few of 'em ever got out, either!" . . . Then it seemed he was in bed and it was harder than ever to breathe. Still, it was evidently morning and they would have to leave the barracks any minute. Could it be that he had overslept? "Is it time to go yet, Sergeant?" He got out of bed to see. "Here! what do you want?" exclaimed somebody in a severe voice of alarm. "I want my shoes," said Henry. "Where's my gun?—" . . . "All right. We'll get them for you. Now, you just lie still and keep covered up." Somebody tucked him in. "Have you got a glass of water, please?" he inquired weakly. . . . Then things became more and more obscure. He was aware of the presence of a man, evidently his father. . . . No: it was the Sergeant at last, summoning him to go. He made a wild effort to get out of bed, but they held him down, and he collapsed on his back exhausted, panting faster than ever. . . .

The doctor and nurse were watching him at noon. His breath had become as rapid as the ticking of a

small clock; his lids were already half-closed over his eyes, his unshaved cheeks dirtily livid and his gaping lips sticky and discoloured in an obscene inhuman mask; his head was strained desperately back, as if some enemy had him by the throat. The panting became fainter; the clock was running down. His lungs were full and he was drowning. Then he had caught breath and struggled on again till he could get no further. Three times they saw him strain to the surface, only to go down. Henry was nothing but a thread of breath forcing its way through thickening channels. Then he was nothing. . . .

"He put up a pretty good fight there at the last," remarked the doctor, noting the death in a register. "If this keeps up we'll have to have a special floor for pneumonia.—I should suggest the second floor." He smiled. "Then we'll have nothing but indigestion up here. Give 'em something to do downstairs.—But seriously, they ought to isolate these cases. It begins to look like an infection."

"I should think so," said the nurse. "And when you consider that the Army's hardly over here yet—"

"Now, be sure all his personal belongings get to the right place. They've been making a fuss about that lately."

The orderly assembled in a khaki handkerchief all the things in the pockets of the uniform. There

were a pipe, a crushed bag of tobacco, photographs of Henry's mother and sister, half-a-dozen obscene post-cards bought from a man who had been to Paris and a little brown leather pocket-book stained dark with sweat.

The Madman's Funeral

"Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe!"

The wind was bitter as a curse
Above the little pavement where
The mourners waited with the hearse
To bear the madman to his crypt;
There was no colour in the air;
The very trees stood lank and stripped.

Somewhere behind the listening doors
The living lifted up the dead.
We heard the creaking of the floors;
We heard their slow unheeding tread;
Dimly we saw six shadows—then
Six shadows stiffened into men.

And all at once there rose a squeal
And a startled devil leapt and slid
Along the madman's coffin lid,
A runty devil white and plump
As mushrooms by a rotten stump;
His eyes were sharp as pins of steel.

And swooping after swift as flame
And dark as blood that's partly dried,
On tilted feet a second came;

Who sliding from the coffin rim
Hopped to the hearse and climbed inside,
Pulling the other after him.

And there behind the polished glass
They grinned like monkeys in a cage.
Four demons paced with studied pomp
Down the slow steps, rump bruising rump,
Moaning as if in feeble rage.
And last one visaged like an ass

Flicked his hoofs to a two-heeled trot,
Scraping a rusty violin,
Held between nose and hairy hand;
He tripped behind the impious band
And to the tune of an old gavotte
Wheezed a low catch called "Love's a Sin."

The crowd gave way; the living bore
The dead man to the hearse's floor.
The demons gaped like routed whores,
Baying a dirge profane and loud;
While those within sat on the corse
And thumbed their noses at the crowd.

Then with a shout they broke and ran
To find them each a cushioned seat;
One goatish, hairy and unclean
Beside the clergyman was seen,

And whispering to that holy man
Rode smirking through the village street.

The one whose shape was like an ass
Moved sidling to the hearse's wheel,
And seeing where the coachman was,
And a bare space beside him there,
Leapt through the intervening air
With a click of heel on horny heel.

Amid the hearse's decent plumes
Strange music sagged from strings and bone;
And one whose eyes were fierce with pride
Sought out the place I kept alone.
I smelt the smell of opened tombs
When he had climbed inside.

Silk violet gloves episcopal
Made suave the talons of his claws;
His paunch let yellow foldings fall
Upon the shrunken thighs; he smiled,
Clasping a gesture of applause.
A whip cracked out; drab hackneys filed.

I saw the people left and right
Stare fearfully before a sight
So solemn, fat and atheous.
"Alas for us!" the demon said,
"God is a dolt to use us thus;
Where shall we rest now *he* is dead?

"But, oh! what sport we had of him!
Not since the great King Solomon
Lost his ring at the world's rim
And all the demons under sea
Stretched their wings and sought the sun
Has any known such jollity."

Through ends of streets the cortège wound:
On either side the houses stood,
Huddled, uncared for, skulls of wood,
Black windows socketed with eyes.
The demon's throat grew thick with sound:
"The madman once was otherwise.

"Joy was his in the clear light
And in the colours of the air,
In rooms where skilful violins
Renewed his adolescent sins;
Love was his, and in his sight
One fair woman seemed more fair.

"We crept on him with swaying tread;
Through sleeves and fingers whispering,
Shaped words so lewd and blasphemous
That love became a leprous thing.
We laughed each night beside his bed
Till God's own laughter answered us.

"And still we whispered, 'Love is lust,
The blue but grey, a broken tune

Outtops the mouth of melody.'
We turned the earth to stinking dust,
We dimmed the sun and left the moon
A twisted penny in the sky.

"We sucked his pores with pallid lips,
We mirked the blood within his heart,
We drove him forth with iron whips,
We scourged him back with bloody rods ;
Then drew him to a place apart
To intimate this work was God's."

The carriages began to wind
Into a place of mounds and stones,
Hedges of bronze-green box and yews
Green-black and clipped to curious cones.
The fiend resumed: "Tonight I choose
Another nicely fashioned mind."

The carriage stopped. The corpse went by
And shadows in stiff folds of black.
I looked into the demon's eye
And saw therein, circled with fire,
My own eyes staring. I left the hack,
And with the fiend plashed through the mire.

We reached the grave. I looked and peered,
Nor saw a devil anywhere;
But straight the coachman seized a fife
And played an old and ribald air;

And through the prayers the parson leered
With hot eyes at the sexton's wife.

Behind the fir tree of his aunt's
Ungainly tomb, the grocer found
A fiery flask; a crape veil shrieked
And passed into a rigid trance;
And a boy laughed. The grave ropes creaked,
The coffin sank into the ground.

Earth, falling stone and gritty clay
Resounded from the coffin lid;
Spades crunched on earth and scraped on stone;
Earth fell; at last a low mound hid
The place where the madman's body lay.
The crowd dispersed. I stood alone.

I dared not move. A sudden dread
Was on me lest I turn my head
And see naught but the frozen sod
And the stiff trees which twilight blurred;
For in my thought I shaped a word
Cruel and meaningless as God.

Emily in Hades

Emily had died of influenza in the stiff and rather barren bed-room which no longer than a year before she had fitted up with wedding presents. Her husband sat dry-eyed and dazed, aghast before the prospect of his future; it was not that a great passion had united them; it was not that the contrast was so great between Emily lying beside him living and Emily lying beside him dead; but he had really been fond of Emily and had grown completely accustomed to her, and, having worked very hard to support her in the bondselling business, now found himself at a ghastly loss as to why he should go on selling bonds. He had thought he had his life so securely arranged, with everything provided for, and now what he had supposed the safest of his investments had completely failed. He ought to have prevented it somehow, his well-trained conscience told him; he had been found wanting in efficiency. If he had only been firmer about overshoes, she would never have caught that cold.

But Emily herself only knew that she was no longer being smothered: the pillows had suddenly dissolved from her chest and the pain been snuffed out in her throat. She was standing in a kind of

dark mist, which she thought at first was the night. Yet it was not quite like the night nor even quite like the twilight. It was more like the hour before dawn when even the stars are blotted out. It was all so strange that she forgot to feel relief at being a real person again. It was like waking up from a fainting fit: you could hardly recognize yourself.

When she did come to think about herself, she wondered if she *were* a real person. She was conscious of nothing but her thoughts and of the grey dimness that surrounded her. She could neither smell nor taste the mist nor feel whether it were warm or cold. She must be in a dream, she thought; one didn't taste or feel in dreams. But her situation seemed natural and fixed, as it never did in dreams. She tried to remember what had happened to her; she had been very sick in bed (she could see it all objectively now); she had become more and more uncomfortable, so uncomfortable that she could not stand it; she had thought she was going to die.—Then, definitely, in a flash, she realized that she had died.

But she did not at first feel distress at having left her husband and the world; she was filled with the buoyancy of freedom and thrilled with adventure like a child. So you came out all right on the other side and you were still you! She laughed in her joy of release; she was all alive with expectancy. Perhaps, she thought with ex-

citement, she was at last going to listen to the music she had been waiting for all her life!

When she had grown accustomed to the queer darkness, she saw that she was on the edge of something: there was a great slate-grey floor in front of her stretching off into misty remoteness and along it lay a rough rock-like strip with blackish cracks and streaks; beyond this and behind her rose a thick and profound darkness, like a bottom-less black sea. And then she saw that the strip was a beach, a beach without sand or seaweed, as bare as a belt of lava.

Scrutinizing this strange shore, she made out a shape like a boat that seemed to be lying beached, not far away on her left. She started toward it, noticing as she went that she could not feel the the ground beneath her feet. When she had come nearer, she found that it was a big unpainted flat-bottomed barge, with an old man sitting in the prow. As she stopped and stood in doubt a few yards away, he turned and regarded her without interest from dim and lifeless eyes, and she suddenly became aware that she had nothing on but a night-gown and that her hair was down her back.

"Get in," said the old man.

"Why?" asked Emily. "Where will you take me?"

"Over to Hades," he replied.

"But I'm not dressed!" she protested.

"It doesn't matter," he said.

He spoke so much as if everything were a matter of course and seemed to take so little interest in the conversation that, after hesitating a moment, she climbed into the boat, because it seemed to present itself as the only thing to do. And, as soon as she had taken her place on a plain plank seat in the stern, the old man came down to the centre, pushed the boat off from the shore, and fitting great clumsy oars to the locks, began to row silently away. As he sat facing Emily, she observed him as well as she could in the strange atmosphere, which made everything shadowy and uncertain, like things seen in moving pictures, or rather, she presently amended, like things thought and not seen—as if there were no real substance which the senses could touch or smell, but only shapes seen and heard as one sees and hears in one's mind. He was dressed in old and weatherworn clothes, as colourless as the barge, and bent above his monstrous oars with infinite weariness and indifference. The lumbering boat seemed scarcely to disturb the leaden surface of the water.

"You say that you are taking me to Hades?" she at length took courage to inquire. "Isn't there any Heaven then?"

"No," he answered, "There's no Heaven."

"But what about God?" she asked.

"God is dead," he replied.

"But I thought that God was immortal."

"How could man, who lives so short a time, hope to make a God who would be deathless?"

It seemed to her that he answered her questions as part of a monotonous routine. Everybody who came, she supposed, must ply him with the same questions. And the thought of the innumerable millions of souls whom he must have ferried across and the innumerable millions more who were still to get into his boat and ask about Heaven and God and receive disappointing answers appalled her and dulled her hope at the very beginning of the journey. After all, it appeared that Hades was a dreary sort of place. She would have thought it might at least have been horrible or in some other way exciting. If Charon had only been kindly, or hateful, or grand, instead of being simply indifferent and stultified by his work! Her thrill of adventure faltered; was death going to be just like life?—She did not often indulge in thrills, having learned that nothing ever happens. If you thrilled in anticipation, you were sure to be disappointed. So Emily had found life and probably death was no different. . . .

But presently she spoke again: "Isn't there any music in Hades?"

"No," he answered, "No music."

After a moment's pause, she went on: "Tell me," she said, "how shall I ever find the people I know, when I arrive over there?"

"I shall land you where you belong."

"Is every one who ever died in Hades?"

"Yes," he replied.

"But aren't they all mixed up together?—I mean, the countries and the periods."

"No: not much."

"But why aren't they?"

"Because people don't feel at home down here in other countries and ages than their own any more than they do on earth."

"But I should think the chances to meet people would be so terribly interesting—with everybody who has ever died from the beginning of the world to choose from."

"They don't like anybody who has lived any differently from themselves. They keep to the same little groups. It is just the same as on earth."

They were nearing the shore now; it lay like a grey line on the water. She strained her eyes, in the dimness, to make out what it was like; as the boat came closer and closer it resembled more and more exactly the shore they had just left behind. She thought, in a gust of impatience, what was the use of *having* two shores, if they were both going to be just alike? She tried to tell herself again that everything was just like that in life, but she couldn't, for all her resignation, keep from feeling a little forlorn. She was going to see people, that was true—all sorts of people, perhaps: for she swore that, now she was dead, she was going to know more of the world; no little groups for her!—but the in-

difference of the old man, the greyness and vagueness of the atmosphere, the impression of nothing ever happening, of nothing ever expected to happen, chilled her heart with an apprehension of some ghastly disappointment.

Still, she told herself as they arrived, it couldn't really be so bad; it must at least be very different and strange. . . .

Charon pushed the boat with his oar till it stuck in the shallow water. "You can get out here," he said.

"But I'll get my feet wet!" she protested. "Can't you push it up where it's dry?"

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "You'll find that you can't feel the water."

So she got out and stood on the beach and found that what he said was true; just as she could not feel the firmness of the ground, so she could not feel the coldness of the water that wavered about her bare feet.

Then, as the old man said nothing more, but rested listlessly on his oars, she remembered something she had heard about paying Charon with an obol.

"I'm sorry I have no money," she explained. "Perhaps I can borrow some."

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "There's no need for money here."

"Why not?"

"There's nothing to buy."

"People don't eat here, I suppose."

"No," he answered, "people don't eat."

She turned and walked up the shore. There was no wall of darkness here; only a kind of flat wide plain with a misty uncertain horizon. She felt timid about going further; it was impossible to see straight before you; the air was mysterious with shadows and there was no telling what was behind them. And then, she was almost undressed; she did not want to go among people; she would feel undignified and ridiculous—at a terrible disadvantage.—But then, on the other hand, she could hardly stay on the shore. So she walked up among the shadows.

She found it was rather like a fog; you could see immediately around you, but you could not, except by glimpses, see anything very far away. Once she thought she caught a human shape that passed obscurely at a distance and she hurried on in terror. Then, right upon her, two shapes seemed to come around a shadowy corner and passed quite close at her side; and, staring fearfully in their faces, she recognized them as people she had known in the town where she had been born. They were an elderly married couple, who had used to come to dinner sometimes. The man was still wearing the suit he had had on when he was killed in a motor accident, on an election night celebration; and he was still displaying in his lapel an enormous celluloid button with the legend: "Vote for Taft."

But the woman, she was glad to note, wore a night-gown like her own, having died respectably in bed. They had never been happy together, but they now walked side by side, as if from sheer force of habit. Neither turned to Emily nor spoke; she could not even tell whether they had seen her. They passed on and dissolved in the shadows, two lifeless, colourless beings, wandering slowly and in silence, without interest or aim.

Then other shapes commenced to appear, moving singly or in groups; they were evidently all people from the place which had once been her home. They kept still to the same companions, she observed, as when they had actually lived there; the lawyer walked beside the doctor, the barber beside the tobacconist, and families who had hated each other but had continued to live together were by no means divided in death. And none of them noticed Emily any more than they noticed each other. It wounded her that people she had known, who, she had once supposed, had been fond of her, should not trouble to welcome her among them or be sorry she had died so young. As she walked on and on in the dusk and never heard a human voice, she decided at last that she must be brave and try speaking first to somebody.

She was walking in what seemed to be a wide clearing in the shadows, rather like a large open field, and at the end of it she saw pacing slowly back and forth across its width the thin figure of a

woman, with her head bent toward the ground. This was an opportunity, thought Emily; she would rather approach one person than a group and a woman, she somehow felt, would be better than a man. So she advanced shyly across the field and cut off the woman in her walk.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but could you give me some information?"

The woman stopped abruptly in her steady and monotonous pacing and looked up with something of the uncertainty and apprehension of an old woman—though Emily could see that, when she died, she could not have been much above fifty.

"What is it you want to know?" she asked, in a slightly petulant tone.

"I'm trying to find my mother," explained Emily. "Her name is Mrs. Julius Allen."

The woman scrutinized her a moment. "Aren't you Emily Allen?" she asked.

It was the Head Mistress of the boarding school to which Emily had been sent in her teens; but she seemed to Emily much changed from the last time she had seen her. Her face, which had once been so severe, with so firm a mouth, seemed flaccid and distressful now, shaken and vexed by pain.

"You startled me," the woman went on. "I came back in here purposely so that I shouldn't be always pestered with the questions of newcomers. I advise you to do the same thing. You'll find it will save you a lot of bother."

She was no longer a mistress and queen giving lofty warnings and commands to a miserable little girl, who stood terrified in her presence. With her first words the old relation of mistress and pupil was abandoned and she seemed to take it for granted that they were both poor creatures together, with no further need for appearances on either side and no interest other than the avoidance of being disturbed, as if they had been "set" old bachelors or nervously peevish invalids.

And Emily was profoundly shocked at her old superior's abjectness; she felt as if she had gone behind the scenes of a play, a play in which she had believed, and had seen the backs of the canvas trees and the actors washing off their paint. But her first dismay was succeeded by a swift and eager resentment. Why should she, a strong young girl, be classed with a peevish old woman? What did the teacher mean by speaking as if they were both convicts in a jail, old women in a poor-house? She, Emily, had been married, anyway. *She* was not a sallow sterile spinster. And, as she stood before that flat-chested figure in its shapeless undress of a kimono, she was proudly conscious of the little breasts that lifted her own girl's nightgown.

And she fed this new resentment with all her old grievances against her. How many lies this woman had told her! What a lot of cant she had talked! How she had repressed and imprisoned her students and kept them from seeing young men, till

they had been ready to fall in love with the doctor at the school or the man who brought papers in the morning! She had lectured them on purity and reserve and their mission of inspiring their knights; they were to perform a function almost religious, to embody Tennysonian ideals. She had painted a figure in gleaming white with a worshipper kissing its hem. And she had somehow made them feel that love was something impious and unclean; she had infected Emily with a fear and distaste she had never quite got over, though it had greatly perplexed and distressed her to guess that her husband should find her cold. He enjoyed love more than she did, she was sure of that, and she sometimes wondered if other women enjoyed love more than she. . . . In any case, she was angry with the people at her old school, who had misrepresented love and left her to be harrowed by shocks more painful than any she could have had from the truth.

She had stood silent for a moment, thrown off by the fatuous advice, but at last she suddenly burst out, with unaccustomed boldness and authority: "Let me ask you something," she demanded, "why did you never tell me anything?"

The other seemed to wince a little.

"Because I knew nothing myself," she said.

"But I suffered for believing your lies," the girl cruelly went on. "You did us all a great injury. After all, we were all young girls. You should have taught us something about love along with the

trigonometry. That was going to be the business of most of us!"

"Ah, why do you tell me all this?" cried the woman, appealing to Emily with eyes full of bitterness and grief. "I have suffered much worse than you, because I have lived much longer, and because I lived all that time by the light of my own teaching. I could not throw it off as easily as you could when you left me. It was like an armour about me; I carried it all my life. You see, I believed in religion. I thought I was serving God. I believed that everything I sacrificed would be made up to me after I died. And now it seems that, after all, religion wasn't really true and there's nothing but this pagan Hell. How could I have known that?"

"Oh, forgive me, forgive me!" begged Emily. "I'm terribly sorry!" And in shame and distress at having scolded this anguished and defeated creature, she tried to take her by the hand and kiss her on the cheek, but the hand was not warm in her own and her lips felt nothing against them. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," she repeated.

"It doesn't matter," said the teacher. "Nothing really matters here." And at this Emily felt uncomfortable, as she had at old Charon's indifference, and a chill, almost of resentment, made her almost cold again. But she still protested: "I'm sorry! I shouldn't ever have blamed you."

"I don't know who's to blame," said the other. "I believed in the best ideals I could find. It seems

unfair that they should have won me nothing and that, instead of helping other people, they should actually have done them harm."

"But at least they won you security. They won you time for study and work."

"Oh, security!" sighed the woman. "I have plenty of security here!"

And again the girl felt uneasy. She changed the subject abruptly: "I don't suppose you can tell me how to find my mother."

"I'm afraid not," said the teacher. "You'll just have to wander around. But I shouldn't worry about it. . . . You have all eternity before you," she ended, with a sad smile.

So Emily set out again in that faded unreal world. She asked almost everybody she met if he knew where her mother was. Most of them simply shook their heads and did not even stop to talk to her; a few of them remembered having seen her mother, but could not tell how long ago, because there was no day or night in Hades and consequently no way to tell time; it was equally impossible to give directions for reaching any particular place, because the ground was perfectly bare and there was nothing above it but the shadows, which kept imperceptibly shifting and melting into one another.

But at last she came upon a group of women sitting in a sort of circle. She recognized her mother at once, though she was approaching her from behind, by the little hard knob of black hair which she

wore at the back of her head. She had always felt that this knob was depressingly old-fashioned and had often wondered why her mother had imitated her grandmother in this, brushing her thin hair straight back and parting it in the middle.

The other women, she now saw, were her grandmother and her aunts. She stood on the edge of the circle and sent them an eager "Hello!"

"Why, if it isn't Emily!" said Aunt Mollie, with a benign and fatuous smile. "I always said Emily would come.—All things come to him who waits!" she added with another smile.

Her mother raised solemnly upon Emily her large and gentle eyes, in which was neither happiness nor sorrow, but only a prosaic seriousness and a mild sort of wonder. Her long preoccupation in life with kitchens and house-work and furniture and the more physical aspects of the care of her husband and children had invested her with the soulless dignity of a plain mahogany bed; and, now that she had come to Hades, where there was nothing more for her to do, she seemed ready to sit through eternity, as if she were a chest of drawers, content in the conviction of her usefulness and the sense of her duties discharged.

"Why, Emily!" she exclaimed. "I didn't expect you so soon."

"Well, here I am," said Emily.

"What did you die of, dear?"

"Influenza."

"What a pity!" sighed Emily's mother. "And you married so well, too."

People felt no grief, it seemed, in Hades, that other people should be dead; they merely took it for granted; every one died sooner or later. Even her mother, whose expression of regret was the first she had heard, seemed to take her daughter's early death with a disconcerting calmness.

"How is Fred?" her mother went on.

"Very well, the last I heard."

"How is the baby?"

"All right."

"You haven't had a baby yourself, have you, Emily?"

"No."

"Is Marjorie all right?"

"Yes: I think so."

"Well," her mother concluded, "It's nice to have you here. You can just sit around with us here and after awhile the others will be along and then we'll all be together."

"But what should I do here?" demanded Emily, flashing with resentment again. "I don't see that there's anything very interesting about what you're doing!"

"It's a nice long rest," said her mother.

"Nothing's very interesting down here," put in her Aunt Elmira.

"I don't care," observed Aunt Mollie. "What I

always say is they can say what they please, but *I* believe there's a God. It'll all come out all right in the end; now you wait and see if it doesn't."

"But I don't want to stay with you here!" cried Emily, who had never liked Aunt Mollie. "You kept me with you all my life. You tried to make me think that our little family was the whole world. —I never went anywhere and I never found out anything. You made me believe that all I had to do to be desirable for some one to marry was not to do certain things—not to be 'unladylike.' I remember that, when I was a little girl, you warned me just as impressively as if it had been one of the Commandments that I must never look into a barber shop when I was passing by in the street. You never let me know what marriage was and let me get married without knowing. You only wept at the wedding and told me it was all very solemn—till I felt as if getting married must be some kind of catastrophe!"

"Why, Emily," answered her mother, "how can you talk like that? If you had been brought up the way I was, you wouldn't think I was so strict. Why, my father wouldn't let us read the newspapers or play games on Sunday or anything. And he wouldn't let us go to dances, because he thought dancing was wicked. In West Beachley there weren't any of those Saturday night parties that last till Sunday morning. We had to toe the mark, I can tell you, in my day.—Why, at Norwood, I used

to let you children do practically anything you wanted to—anything decent and respectable, that is."

And Emily realized fully for the first time in her life that to her mother the change from West Beachley to Norwood had been as much a rise and liberation as the change from Norwood to New York had been to Emily herself. When her mother had married the General Manager of the Norwood Woolen Mills, she had found herself in a world so much richer and freer than the one she had left behind that she had never thought to look further, but, in satisfaction and assurance, had lived and died among its standards.

"I'm sorry, mother," said Emily. "Never mind. I shouldn't have tried to blame you. But I'm afraid I can't stay with you here. I want to look up some other people in a minute.—I'll be back to see you later." And, after talking with them a little—in order not to seem too abrupt—she left them with phantom kisses and lost herself again in the grey.

"Oh, I wish I could find some one young," she thought, "some one I really like!"

Then suddenly, a moment afterwards, like a god appearing in a mist, a naked young man came towards her, who looked in her face and cried out, in a voice that sounded almost alive: "Why, Emily! What are you doing here?"

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" she exclaimed. "I just died."

"You've come to a pretty sad place," he replied, with a sorrowful smile.

"Is it so depressing then?"

"There isn't very much doing. You get kind of stale after while."

She hesitated a moment. "Isn't there any music here?"

"I haven't heard any," he replied.

In a second, she had changed the subject: "It was terrible about your death. I cried about it for days."

"Well, it was darn nice of you to be sorry," he said, "but you shouldn't have let it worry you. I guess it really doesn't make much difference."

"We were all so proud, though, that you were killed at St. Mihiel!"

"Well, I don't know what the death notice said, but I was 'way behind the lines. I was an M. P. and had to go around and drive 'em out of the cafés at half past nine; and one night some dirty wop hid up an alley and shot me."

"Oh, how dreadful!" she cried.

As he spoke, he had tapped his left breast, where she saw a black bullet wound.—And she also saw what she had hardly dared to let herself notice before: that, in his nakedness, he was very handsome. As she had known him in life, his clothes had not been particularly neat and she was surprised now at the clear outline and ordered economy of his body. Instead of being like her husband, with most

of his muscles invisible, she could see them move, smoothly and easily, as he shifted his position. Though she had always been attracted by him in life and tremendously excited when he had called upon her, she found it almost incredible now that anybody so beautiful could have lived in a city like Norwood and gone about its commonplace business. And she observed that even his feet, instead of being great slabs of flesh, were high-arched and square-toed and no longer or wider than they should be.

He was not embarrassed by his nakedness and made no comment upon it—though she herself had been abashed at meeting him without his clothes—but stood with an unperturbed dignity and a cool unconscious grace, moving his arms occasionally as he talked, in the artless and homely gestures of the undistinguished American.

"Tell me," she went on, playing the game of making conversation, as she had always done with him in life, "what do the soldiers who are dead think about the war, now that it's over? Do they think it was all worth while or do they think they 'died in vain'? Some people are saying one thing and some people the other."

"They never think about it at all. It was all so bum, why should they? You see, about the only thing you can do to amuse yourself in Hades is to remember the pleasant things that happened to you when you were alive. So they have practically forgotten the war. . . . I know how I felt about it

when I first arrived down here: I ripped my darn uniform off and pitched it in the lake."

"But doesn't anybody object to your not wearing any clothes?" she asked, with a smile which she felt was daring.

"No: nobody objects to anything down here." And he added, after a pause: "Why don't you take your nightgown off? Nobody cares."

It was her turn to pause now. "I suppose I might," she said at last. "This isn't much of a thing to go around in, is it?" And she took the nightgown off self-consciously, pulling it over her head, and stood before him in her slender beauty, with her thin boy-like thighs and her breasts that hung like rain-drops on a pane, and the low-swelling rondure between them that had never borne a child.

"You certainly are pretty!" he said, as she stood not quite knowing what to do, and then came over to her and first took her hands in his and then put his arms around her and kissed her on the mouth.

But she could not feel his body against hers nor the pressure of his lips; she did not grow hot nor tremble at the touch of his lover's hands. When she shut her eyes beneath his kiss, it was as if there were no one there, and she had to open them upon him to take pleasure in his presence.

And presently he relinquished his embrace and stood awkwardly, in silence, keeping only her hands. "It's too bad," he said at length, "that I never made love to you in life."

"Why didn't you?" she asked. "You should have. I wanted you to."

"Did you really?" he replied, and stood staring at the ground a moment. "I was too chivalrous," he went on. "I was idealistic about things like that. I couldn't have married you then and I thought I oughtn't to make love to you. I thought you wouldn't want me to, if I didn't ask you to marry me; and that, even if you were willing to let me, it wouldn't be exactly honourable. But I know now I made a mistake. That kind of chivalry's all bunk: I found that out in France."

"Did you ever think of me in France?" she asked, and he answered: "Yes, I surely did"—but with so little of the lover's enthusiasm that she felt quite sure the French women must have driven her out of his head.

"I thought of you, too," she said. "I missed you a lot."

"It's too bad," he protested again. "It's too bad." Then, "Let's sit down here together," he invited. "There's no place to go."

So they sat down together on the ground and he put his arm about her body. But she was thinking how vivacious and attractive the French women must be. She felt charmless and pale, as she imagined them, and it filled her with a strange distress. She would like so much to be like them, if she only had the chance!

And then she realized suddenly that she would

never have the chance—that she was nothing but a poor ghost, a bodiless, passionless shadow! She had told herself up to now that the languid people she had met were all old and stupid people, who were dead things before they died. But, in the presence of this young man, who might once have thrilled her with his touch, but who stirred her less now than a lover she might merely have imagined when alive, she knew with sickening despair and sudden terrible grief, that she was only a shadow herself, that her flesh would never live again, that she must walk among indifferent wraiths till she became as indifferent as they—a wisp of spirit lost for ever in a world of twilight and mists.

They sat on together in silence; their love scene seemed to go blank. A listlessness had absorbed him and he sat staring blindly at her hand, which he could not press with his own. A fear and a shame possessed her and an anger which wept without tears. She must be alone, she felt; she must rouse herself and escape.

She brusquely got to her feet. "I want to go on," she said. "I'll see you again very soon."

"Hey, don't go, Emily!" he cried.—But, for dread of having him tell her it was useless, she broke away and plunged among the shadows.

His numbness seemed still to hold him, for he had not risen from the ground. . . .

She came at last to the shore, which seemed almost picturesque now, after the grey monotony of

the interior. Not far away, she saw Charon unloading another newcomer, a tall rather fine-looking man with a clerical collar, who gazed about him in a puzzled way and then came up the beach.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but can you tell me whether this is Heaven or Hell?"

"It's neither," she replied. It's what they call Hades."

"That is strange," he remarked thoughtfully, bending troubled brows a moment. "This must be a dream."

"Oh, no! It's not a dream," she said bitterly. "You're really dead."

"And what does one do here?" he inquired, raising shy and honest eyes to hers.

"Not much of anything, as far as I can see!" she answered in her anger and chagrin, and then, as she saw that he was hurt by this harsh and abrupt disillusionment, she was sorry for him and added, to soften the shock a little: "If you go further back from the shore, you'll find the people you know."

"Thank you very much," he replied, and walked slowly up toward the shadows.

Terror shrouded her heart; she was sickened by the realization that the answer she had just given the clergyman was horribly like the answers she had received when she first arrived in Hades. She had come just like that poor man, with hopes and interests and desires; and now, in so short a time, her attitude toward him was exactly like theirs toward

her: morose, indifferent to others, unwilling to be questioned at all—because it reminded one too sharply of one's own first blank failures and wounds.

She suddenly ran down to Charon, who was just pulling off from the shore.

"Oh, won't you take me away from here, please?" she cried. "Take me to some other country—somewhere where the people are different! I want to see people entirely different from these people here! There must be millions of people more interesting than these—people who lived in Europe hundreds of years ago." (She was thinking of the picturesque figures in historical romances.) "I've never been to Europe in my life. Won't you take me where the Europeans are?"

"All right. Get in," assented Charon. "But you'll find it doesn't make much difference in the long run."

She stretched herself on her back, to think, at the bottom of the boat, and stared up at the desert of sky, which was everywhere the same. There was no play of shadows here, but a topless height of space. It must be infinity, she thought. One looked up and lost oneself in deep unvaulted distances, where there were no sun and no stars for the homeless eye to cling to and for the imagination to accept as a sort of ceiling for the world. And there was no air to colour space with comfortable layers of blue; the abyss was perfectly colourless, at once limpid and dim. It was infinity, it was nothing; it affronted and terri-

fied the soul. One was drowned in it as one looked; one was choked, like a fish out of the water, filled to bursting with that vast negation, which one could neither breathe nor feel.

She turned away swimming eyes and watched the passing of the shore. So exactly alike was every part to every other part that she would not have known they were moving at all, if it had not been for the furrows which streaked the dim water faintly in lines that flickered a little. And as she watched for uncounted hours the interminable ribbon of the land lying low and narrow and dark beneath its burden of shadows, the passionate impulse to revolt, the fierce demand for life and colour, all the shuddering intolerable anguish of her baffled and breaking heart seemed to melt away in the air, as if it were absorbed by space, seemed to fade and dull and go to sleep, leaving listless vacuity behind them, like high resolutions forgotten in the heat of a summer day. . . .

At last, they turned in toward the shore. She gazed languidly before her. What she saw did not differ at all from the shore they had just left behind and she contemplated it without thought, unmindful of what she had come for. . . .

Charon roused her when they were beached. "You can get out now," he said.

She summoned her attention with an effort and climbed down out of the boat. A little of her hope returned; she felt a faint echo of excitement.

"Are the people really different here?"

"Yes: they're different," said the old man; and he put out to sea again.

And again she confronted the barren shore, with its blurred forest of shadows. . . .

A figure stood before her, a figure in a long gown. She could not tell at first whether it was a woman or a man, but, when she had come quite close, she saw that it was a man, who wore his hair rather long and dressed in high stockings, like tights. His complexion was very dark and his eyes were so large and black that, with no light to make them shine, they looked like great oval pits sunk deep beneath his brows.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but can you tell me where I am?"

"This is Greece," the man replied,—"Greece of the VIIth century before Christ." He spoke with a curious accent.

"And are you a Greek?" she inquired.

"No: I am an Italian," he answered, "—an Italian of the XVIth century. I am a stranger here like yourself." He smiled a little as he spoke and she felt that she was going to like him. He had not the hangdog look of the Americans she had met, but held himself even in Hades with a certain dignity and pride.

"I am an American," she explained, "but I don't want to stay with the Americans."

"What is it you want?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know!" she replied. "More life, I suppose."

"Don't you know there is no life here?" he said gently. "You must not look for life here."

"I want a different kind of people then," she got out, feeling helpless and foolish.

"I know," he answered, "I know . . . I wanted a different kind of people, too, when I first came down to Hades. I had fallen in love with the Greece that was dead and I thought my own time a barbarous one. Now, the people of your age, I am told, think my own century very beautiful."

"And is that the reason you came here?"

"That was a part of the reason. But it was not only Greece I loved."

"Oh, tell me what love was like," she begged, "when you were alive. That's what I want to hear so much. Please tell me what love was like then!"

He smiled again. "Did you think that love was more perfect then than now? Did you think I should tell you some wonderful tale of desire fulfilled and still kept? Ah, never since Daphne turned to laurel was desire so little satisfied as mine. For even the nuns who espouse Jesus Christ have their husband after a fashion; and even Dante possessed Beatrice by believing it was her spirit he worshipped and by recreating that spirit himself more noble than it ever really was. But for me there was no mystic union and no high exaltation of the

soul. I had nothing but torture and burning thirst and intolerable longing!

"I was a poet and scholar on earth—a scholar who knew Greek. That was a rare thing in my time, because Greek had been buried for centuries. When we first read Plato and Homer, our minds seemed flooded with the sun. We rode through the country to rescue Greek from the ignorance of the monasteries, as our ancestors had ridden to save Palestine from the hands of the unbeliever. I rode in the service of Apollo; but Apollo destroys his servants. For one day I found the poems of Sappho in the filthy refectory of a monastery. It was a greasy and worm-eaten volume wounded with great holes and stains, and scrawled by the swinish monks with caricatures and accounts. But to me it was as if a goddess had been lifted again from the earth, not merely in the coldness of marble, dull and silent and stiff, but moving in divine beauty, with divine music on her lips. For we had thought Sappho lost forever, when our barbarous ancestors burned her poems.

"With the scholar's jealous greed, I told no one what I had found. There were better scholars than I; I could not have borne to have them read it sooner. With the little Greek that I knew and the strangeness of the dialect, (though it seemed to me that the Æolian forms did but make them darker and richer), it was more than two years before the

poems had dropped their masks for my eyes. But when I had forced the forest of the text, all bristling and tangled to the eye, to give up the beauty it concealed, I was straightway an adorer and slave!—It was a woman shaken by passion, yet with the cold intelligence of a man, an artist controlling her terrible cries with the subtle conscience of a critic. Who ever heard of such a woman?— a woman with passion and reason, and a supreme poet as well! I loved her as I had never loved any real living woman, yet she troubled and tortured my soul. Not only was I troubled as all men are troubled by women who choose women for lovers, but I was driven mad to realize that no lover, either woman or man, could ever quench her fierce longing or cure her noble chagrin.—Here was a woman whom no lover could satisfy, who could never find love final. She gave herself up to beauty with a passion that never scrupled; but at the end there was always bitterness: love lasted such a little while; it was not she who did not want to keep it. It was not she who slew it so soon; she grieved its death as much as any. —The cadence *'Ηράμαν μὲν ἔγω σέθεν, Ἄτθι, πάλαι πότα'* —'Once did I love thee, Atthis, long ago'—destroyed my soul with its beauty and its cruel definiteness.—I shuddered with the fear that, even had I lived in Lesbos, I could never really have possessed her.

"I shut myself up from the common world. I no longer cared for my friends: however brilliant they

might be, they had not Sappho's passion; and still less could I bear common women: however beautiful or eager, they appeared to me now in my madness like gross, less than human creatures; beside this half-male woman, they were hardly women at all; the smoothness and roundness of their bodies, which had once consumed me with delight, had now no more magic for me than the smoothness and roundness of worms.—At last, I could neither sleep nor work. I could think of nothing but Sappho. All day and all night the music of her poems sounded exquisitely through my mind and every lift and fall of its beauty gave me exquisite pain. I stumbled about my business, leaving everything unfinished; I would suddenly stop, like a madman, in the midst of what I was doing, and stand dazed and unseeing for hours, crucified by that strange jealousy. Till, at last one day, insane, in a rage against the cruel beauty which had robbed me of my own life and forbidden me to live in hers, I burned all my copies of the poems, that men might never suffer by them, and then, taking ship for the East, threw my body into the sea—and desire ceased with my breath.". . .

But to Emily the story seemed fantastic and unintelligible. He was interested in his life, it was true; which none of the Americans had been; though he had been dead for hundreds of years before they were born. But all this passion about a book! She thought that he must be mad; he had said something about madness in his story.—And, besides, her

attention had flagged; she was deadened by languor again; and the passionate language he spoke was one she had never learned. . . .

"Did you come here to see Sappho?" she asked.

"Yes. I have been here ever since I died."

"I should like to see her, too," she said, though, now that she was back in history, she found that it interested her less than she had thought it would.

"You must let me take you to her," he answered, and led her up towards the shadows.

"But how can I talk to her?" asked Emily. "She can't understand English, can she?"

"Oh, yes," said the scholar, "she has learned it."

"But do people learn things down here? The Americans I saw back there weren't learning or doing anything."

"It depends on one's interest in life," he explained. "If one's love for it is strong enough, one goes on being interested for a while; but in the end one's interest always flags and finally dissolves altogether. When I first came to Hades, for example, I was eager to learn Greek from the Greeks and I studied it here for a while; but now I do not trouble any longer. Even Sappho, whose thirsty mind went on drinking knowledge for ages, has ceased to be thirsty at last."

"And does everything fade then? Does nothing remain in Hades?"

"Only beauty," he replied, "the memory of beauty.". . .

But she did not understand. Walking passively at his side, she felt that historical people were literary and dull. No doubt Sappho was a "highbrow," too. . . .

And at last they came to a woman sitting naked on the ground. She was not beautiful with the classic exactness which Emily had seen in pictures of her. Indeed, her features in themselves were plain—except for the large dark eyes; the nose was much too prominent, with nostrils very large, and the mouth was wide, like a man's. But her proud body was so beautiful that it terrified Emily a little; the breasts were neither flabby nor flat, like the breasts of many women she had seen, and she bore them with the same dignity and grace as she held her alert little head; and the legs, which were folded beneath her, were very smooth and strong. And, though now but the surface of a shadow, without blood or freshness or light, her dark skin seemed even in Hades to glow with a kind of lustre, that showed sharply against the dimness, almost with the brightness of flesh.

As she gazed at this figure—as little self-conscious, as little soft as a man's—Emily felt herself terribly ashamed of her own meagre body and wished that she had not left her night-gown. How thin, how wretched she appeared! What a bony little scarecrow of a creature! She wished she had never come; it was scarcely worth the discomfort. She wanted now only to get away, to be somewhere

by herself, where she could forget all these ghastly meetings, where she would never have to think about anything! Everything in life was like that; she desired now only to resign herself.

But the woman looked up in her face with a quick and inquiring interest. Emily had seen nothing so vivid in Hades.

"This is a little Amerian girl who has come a long way to see you," the scholar began to explain.

Something in that strange plain face, so darkened with a knowledge and passion which were unfamiliar to Emily and which troubled and frightened her a little, but so beautiful even in its phantom from the hot intensity of the spirit, which still smouldered and brooded in Hades, like an inextinguishable flame, moved Emily to burst out abruptly, in a violent unsteady voice, with all that was left of her rebellion and her desperate chagrin:

"Oh, you have known love," she cried. "Tell me: why have I never known love? All my life I have waited for it, but it was never love that came to me. Must I wait forever down here, without even the hope of knowing it? Am I incapable of love? Who is it who has robbed me of it? Did people live so very differently, then, when you were on earth? Were there young girls then as free and brave and as beautiful as you? Tell me, tell me! What must I do to become as you were then? What dreams did you let yourselves dream? What thoughts of men did you think? Was there once another sort

of love less clumsy and unkind than now? Is love cooling off like the sun? Did it die with the ancient world?"

The woman's face seemed to darken, almost as if it were flushing. But she did not speak for a moment. And Emily, abashed at her speech, dropped piteous eyes to the ground; they fell upon a kind of harp, with graceful lines like a vase. For a moment, a spring of hope and relief was opened in her heart, as it occurred to her that here at last she was perhaps going to listen to the music she had waited for all her life.

"Do you play on this?" she asked shyly.

"No," said Sappho, "my lyre is broken."

And then Emily noticed that, indeed, the strings were twisted like tendrils on the shafts of the narrow frame.

She looked up in disappointment and saw that the woman was weeping.

"Oh, don't cry on my account!" she exclaimed, "I really don't mind being dead!"

"It is not because you are dead that I am weeping," she replied, and then drew Emily down with beautiful shadowy arms whose embrace she could not feel. "Sit down beside me here," she said. "I wish that I could help you, my poor child. But I cannot help you now!"

The Death of God

My spirit is a bow unstrung,
My strength is as a twisted pod,
Yet I remember, once, a young
Exultant, wind-flushed, passionate god—
Who fled down the green colourless wave,
Burning the silence with a glittering scale,
Yet found no coral and no sea's floor;
Who plunged and soared and poised, but gave
Care to no thought but that his flail
Threshed a gold sheaf on an idle floor;
Who knew not whence he came, nor cared
While there remained that opening door
And a cloudy flight of palaces, staired
With mirrors, fragments of a separate sun.
Ages were woven and woven, unspun,
Before the delight of winnowed hair,
Of diving sheer from the whirlwind's brim,
Of feeling the runnels of space on bare
Unwearied limbs could weary him.
But slowly a questionless vast despair
Hooded his brain; on his heart an ache
Knocked like a sword against the thigh.
The winds were no longer stiff to slake
The thirst I had—for the god was I!
Centuries circled past with a cry

Like baying hounds. At last I arose
And plunged into the burning gyres
Where the intensest sun-slag glows,
And churned the spindrift till it whirled
Rocketing colours, metallic fires,
Vermilion, cobalt, frost and black-rose.
Urged by a blind, dark, sultry lust
I trampled the blazoned clouds of dust
Like a wild stallion in a pound—
Fire upon dust, dust upon spark—
Till a huge uncouth unthought of world
Went toppling blindly down the dark
With a hot unwieldy sound:
And wonder was then like a sudden wound!

Ages and ages were smuggled away
While I shaped with slowly subtle hand
A universe I had not planned:
Suns of inviolate sapphire burning
With stars to circle upon their light,
Choruses to one high voice returning;
Suns of amber and bluish light,
Shaken like dew on the boughs of night;
Comets with fluttering fetlocks and long tossing manes,
Plunging in triumph against their stiff reins,
Thudding a dust of white fire from their hoofs;
And the stars that have stars for company
When they sit at feast under heaven's roofs
And utter a sweet articulate cry.

Then out of a white wind wandering came
Lovely spirits nimbed in flame
Even against that illumined air;
Stripling they moved,
Bending each on each a remote stare
From arrogant eyes that were wise in love,
Dripping a sun's rain from smooth thighs
As they moved.
And some of them had strength enough
To have followed with speed, unsandalled, unmewed,
The galloping thunders of the sun;
And some wore pointed wings upon
Poised and tremulous heels, subdued—
With a thin crescent of lifted wings,
Ivory-rich misted with silver—the flame
Which dawned a rose ardour from bright hair
Kindled and unbound by the great pair
Which from their shoulders beat or fluttered.
But all were courteous in their pride
Save one, lucescent as his name,
Who, when he would have spoken, uttered
A thin cry, dropped to his knees, and gazed
Down where the stars were, intricately mazed
As gleams of green phosphorus in the tide;
Crouched in a glare like one who has sent
Thick bloodhounds on his own son's scent
And looks into a network of winds.
Then gathering to his feet
He made as if his hands would beat

A dancing measure; and a song
Demon-sweet and wild and strong
Made his face strange—a song of light
And colours wheeling in the light,
Vermilion, saffron, blue-green and blue,
And the blind and unimaginable hue
Which trembles beyond the terror of white;
All things that were and things unknown:
Blindness of suns and staggering stars,
The red-brass pomp of battle cars,
The scraping of spears against a throne.
And all that high unsorrowing throng
Were hid from each other by their tears,
And pressed white brows, because of the song
Which Lucifer made among his peers.
And I too, sitting among them there,
Knew beauty's intimate despair,
And dreamed of a green, wide-islanded star
With one white moon to follow her,
A place where immortal beauty should sit
With mortal eyes to ponder it.

And afterwards I remember, remember,
We sat like stars in the sun's feast chamber,
And I shared with them my mind;
And brooding upon their litheness assigned
Each a rollicking planet to ride,
A moon to tame, or to sit upon
A huge, unruly, turbulent sun.
I taught them all my wit had learned,

How starry speed was qualified
By bulk and distance; why this one burned
And that rolled darkling: all that I knew
And all I guessed might well be true.
They leapt and clashed their ivory spears,
And shouted; and down through the regions of night and morn
Fled like partridges frightened from corn.
I turned that none might see my tears.

And after, long after, I shaped a star
With one white moon to follow her.
A place where immortal beauty should sit
With mortal eyes to ponder it.
There out of odour, sound and colour
I made those shapes which seemed to wear
In the bronze lustre of that undimmed air
A beauty elaborate and austere,
Which now is shadowed, or grown duller
Than an old man's wit to a young man's ear.

I made all forms of greenery
Under the air or beneath the sea:
The tree that like a fountain soars,
The tree that like a cloud downpours
In a rustling rain of silver leaves;
The tree whose petals are gold at noon
And moonlight coloured in the moon;
And every sort of tree that weaves

A net of leaves from limb to limb.
I made green beetles smouldering dim
And pheasants fanned to a golden glare
In the white furnace of the air:
And the many strange sea-breathing things
Which sprawl in jellies and coil in rings,
Dripping slow slime from viscous eyes
Amid the deep sea's forestries.
I made the spider obese and hairy
And taught him to spin and thread an airy
Web of colourless polygons,
And shook against the twisted skein
Cool bubbles of translucent dew,
Violet-gold, and irised rain
The first windy light comes through
When hills are lowered before the dawn.
And still I might feel my breath indrawn
Could I but see that murderous seine
Dredging fat flies from the streams of air
And ugliness dragging up unaware
The careless iridescent dawn.

I made when I had learned to smile
The knobbed and scaly crocodile,
Blue-buttocked, feathery-whiskered apes,
And monkeys with brown tendril shapes;
I made when I had learned to laugh
The painted ludicrous giraffe,
The sluggish hippopotamus,

Leathery, lewd, preposterous:
The dwarfed and bulked grotesquery
Under the winds and beneath the sea.

But beauty alone had terror
To lay delight on my youth, so that I shook
As when the first of morning ripples to clearer
Green the swift lustres of a brook,
And a naked bather wades and is chill.
Yet never was I so seamed with pain,
And for her sake, that not one vein
Was quiet, and carved in wind I ran,
As when the hour was come to fulfil
The breathing body of man.
Lying unstirred, one knee upturned,
Through ruddy loose hair and the broad
Sloped shoulders, down to the noble thigh, there burned
The gracious indolent ardour and
Cloudy repose of a god.
I breathed on his face, and my breath
Went sharp through his side; stretched out my hand—
A shudder of light tumbled his hair,
And he turned his sleep to a stare, aware
Of beauty and aware of death.
And something came back to my blood, I recalled
Lucifer's face, and the circled crowd—
Dim crescents of wings, flushed faces enthralled,
And the lifted throat despair had made proud!

It is long since I have done aught but look
Through blinkered eyes at images
Which once had halted my heart's blood,
As an old man shrunk to a hood
Sits quiet, pondering a book,
For which in his youth he had foregone ease,
Or the mouth of a girl, or gold.
Crouched over my bones and old,
I have long leaned chin upon wrist
And let my thought twist and untwist
Like a black weed dragged in a stream,
And wondered indeed if I exist,
Or am but the end of a dream.
Ah, why must all things come upon trouble
And all that sultry passion seem
A rustle of wind in the dry stubble—
Unless from the first I failed in thought?

The wheels of the chariots were wrought
Of purest bronze, but with a broken rim;
The unshod chargers fell in the long wars.
For all their silver ribaldry the stars
Go mad in their courses, a dry skull
Rots where the moon was beautiful;
The suns were pocked at birth with scars.

Oh, violent and young, distraught
And exulted with undrunk wine, I brought
Vast splendours from the earlier night,
Yet failed because I held in despite
The labour and repose of thought.

Is this shrunk star the flaming dream
Which came with islands and bright-scaled water,
Wheeling a dark and radiant rim
As near and away from the sun it sped?
Was it for this I sought or
Sat in labour? for this that Lucifer
Sang, the unshadowable light-bearer?
And of man, of man, what shall be said?
I would my heart were piteous
That I might pity him! He lifts his head
So bravely to the sun, is amorous
Of beauty, conquest and delight;
Spends blood upon banners; drums the earth
With adventurous tramplings; shrills the air
With the insolent envy of his mirth.
What have I made of him? What—to requite
A love more desperate than despair?
A poor creature smeared with his own dung,
Who struts a little being young
And has scarcely sounded his own distress
Before he has crumbled to rottenness.
Distinguished on a gilded couch
He mutters under his dying breath
Of some old plan of lust or wrath,
Unaccomplished, beyond his touch.
Or left beneath a broken rafter
Crouched on a straw heap, unwarmed, alone,
A stench of frayed flesh about a bone,
He counts that best which never was,
Remembering how the wise drew laughter,

And dead madmen were accounted wise;
How lovers had but their blinded eyes
And Cæsar's armies a tune of brass.

Has the sun no molten core where I may be hid
Is there no penitential fire to shrive me?
O, man, man, man, forgive me,
I wrought, not knowing what I did!

I will start up, dragging these bones
Knee after knee,—if it must be,
Drag this loose strength, knee after knee,
And come at last on the shaken thrones
Of the last golden dynasties
Of time; startle the suns, and leave their skies
A smouldering heap of palace stones
Set in the flaring dusk of a city
Where none is loud for pain or for pity.
I will loose the stars from their high stud
And lash their heavy-hooved stampede
Till foundering they darken, broken with speed;
Dabble the moon's face with earth's blood,
That not one man shall be left at length
To taunt me with enduring youth.

I have forgot—I have no strength!
I am gnawn clean by a ravening tooth.
The blood in my wrist is so sucked and thinned
I cannot drag my beard from the wind
Where its ravelled cords are tossed and lying.
It is not man but god who is dying!

But how had I known that a god should grow old
And his bright hair thin to a streakèd whiteness,
His beard fall long and clotted with mould
Whose heart had been as the dawn for lightness?
How had I dreamt that at last I should look
On the stars in their tumult, and find such pain
In a world I had thought to have made without stain
That my head would sink in my elbow's crook,
My throat give sobs in the place of breath,
My mouth ask easily after death?

My face is turned toward death, and yet,
Weak, bewildered and blind, I grope
Still for the unappeasable hope
That sleep, not death, shall touch my brain,
And touch my eyelids, and restore
Youth and all youth lacked before.
It may be I shall start up again
And put on strength like golden greaves
To the oily shins of a young man set,
And shake the stars till they fall like leaves
In an autumn drift along the air;
Know tumult again and wisdom, and tear
In the delighted lust of my heart
The broad beams of the world apart,
To build again, in another kind,
The orbs and whirlwinds of my mind.

Resurrection

Archer sat in his tent where the air was a shadow cast by stained canvas walls. A mist of tobacco, blue as evening, drifted from his fingers. His mind, restive with idleness, fidgeted with objects, like the hands of a sick child: a cross-legged wooden cot padded with olive blankets, a painted locker trunk, a chair of unplaned wood, a makeshift table holding an empty, brazen shell crammed with branches of dark fragrant green.

He crushed out the fire of his cigarette and tossed it to the ground. The burnished shell had a sombre glint of green where the dark leaves shadowed it, the green linden leaves and the dangling greenish-white clusters, spreading heavily over the rounded brass. He plucked at the threaded flowers, cloying the air with a sweetish smell, dusting his hands with sulphur-pale pollen. And the smell brought back to him a scene out of his childhood in Maryland: a frail, white boy of ten lying between cool sheets on a sunlit bed, begging his mother to bring him an armful of linden, green leaves and the heavy sweet bloom. He remembered the silvery dark trunks of the linden trees which had stood in a curved line on the drive to the house, the

shaded road and the white stones at the border. How strange it was that this boy of a forgotten May twelve years ago, delicate, with inquisitive grey eyes and hair blond as linden pollen, should be sitting here on this alien field, under Montfaucon, a first lieutenant of Infantry in command of a company of American soldiers, guarding a half thousand German prisoners of war. He had thought of many things for that boy, but never, for all the absurdity of his imaginings, of this plain over which the autumn before his own countrymen had fought so long and so hard, over which now the spring wandered like a vagabond, in a discoloured raggedness, more desolate than any autumn.

A week had passed since he had come here, hot without rain. Always it seemed, the sky hung over this difficult land an arid blue, heavy with heat, cloudless. Each morning the German prisoners marched out in a long unwieldy column, with a tithe of guards, to repair the roads broken by shellfire. After them, as soon as the roads were made passable, came the trucks, to tear open the ground and recover the scattered slain, to collect these isolated blanketed dead, box them, and carry them to the slopes of Romagne, there to be reinterred, ranked again in precise lines, with identical white crosses set above them, stained with a name or nameless. Twice daily the trucks went out from the town of Romagne, negro workmen and white non-coms perched on their sides. Twice each day, at noon

and late in the afternoon, they passed his camp, lumbering heavily, leaving on the air a slow defunctive odour, the unmistakable, unforgettable odour of human decay.

Idle and unutterably lonely, he almost wished that Bleeker were here, Bleeker his second lieutenant whom he had come to hate with all the hatred of exacerbated nerves. Bleeker would come in presently, two days late from his leave in Paris, twisting a grin under that absurdly long nose of his. "Lootnant," he would say, "I know I'm overstayed, but I just naturally couldn't get away from the mademoselles." He would let his musette bag slide to the ground by drooping one shoulder. . . . Yet it would be a relief of a sort to have Bleeker here again.

A shadow darkened the sun-stained flap of the tent, and Archer tossed the fragrant twig on the littered table.

"Come in!" he shouted.

A soldier drew back the loose flaps and bending came into the tent.

"Lieutenant, sir, there's a Q. M. lieutenant here from Romagne says you sent for him to take up this grave out'n the stockade."

The soldier was a bulky Georgian who spoke in a plaintive drawl. The cheeks puffed under his pale eyes were glazed with red; his hair was the rainy yellow of hayricks exposed to the wetness of autumn. Always ill at ease with officers, he stooped

uncomfortably under the sloping tent to keep his distance.

"All right, Waters, tell the sergeant I'll be right there."

"Yes sir." The soldier backed out of the tent. Archer followed him.

Outside in the dusty sunlight stood a truck obstructing the roadway, chortling under its long heavy body. Beneath the driver's hood a negro sprawled, his loose forearms hanging over the wheel. Two negro soldiers clothed in blue denim leaped from the board of the truck, dragging after them picks and spades and coils of wire. They moved slowly, grudgingly, like tame crows from their food.

Across the road the tents of the Americans marched in motionless precision, a double file of ochreous-brown pyramids. To their left, still bordering the road, was the stockade, a platoon of canvas pyramids, rigidly ranked, enclosed by a high fence of weathered posts and the steely glint of barbed wire. From each post arms bent inward hanging a curtain of wire. The sky was a monotonous haze of dull blue thinning whitely toward the high sun.

Archer entered the stockade. At the entrance a palish boy presented arms, turning on him the wistful eyes of a tired child. Across the stockade following the interminable strands of rain-bright wire, another sentry, with drooping head and sagging

bayoneted rifle, paced drowzily. Before the first tent, the prisoner sergeant major, a small wiry Prussian clad in rusty green, crouched over a wicker basket in which he had imprisoned a magpie. At Archer's approach, he stiffened tautly and clashed his brodequins, his reddish mustaches protruding bushily toward his unseeing eyes, the varnished visor of his cap making a black crescent of light as he moved. Archer saw that a small group of Americans had collected about the grave. The white cruciform stake was down; a pine box, newly planed and lidless, the length of a man, lay at one side. Over the grave with feet wide apart stood an officer impatient for the negroes to begin.

"Hullo, Lieutenant. I got your notice, but this is the first chance I've had to get here. We're pretty busy up there at Romagne now—runnin' 'em in at the rate of three hunderd a day now. All right you men, le's go."

He was an unkempt little man, who, when he talked, jerked his head like a bird, and the wax-like blue film on his eyes made them like a bird's eyes.

Sullenly the negroes began to dig. The starveling sod, rusty with sorrel, gaped under the strokes of the pick and spat out pebbles and thick clots of clay. The point of the pick overturned clumps of grass, the clinging earth threaded with tiny filaments, white as nerves. The first negro tore the sod from the grave and stood back leaning on his

pickhandle, turning his humid brown eyes and stained eyeballs on his companion, who took his place on the grave shovelling away the loose pebbles and grass, laying bare a level of naked clay.

The negroes worked alternately, rhythmically, as though to the unheard sound of an obscene savage incantation, marking time with the dull thud of the pick and the steely scraping of the spade against stone. The air, heavy with heat, brought slow drops of sweat from the black, dusted foreheads of the negroes. Sullenly, half timorously, they deepened the pit, grunting as they dug.

The soldiers had at first watched in silence, but it was not in their nature to be long awed by anything, and presently they began to bicker among themselves. . . .

"They could take me out an' shoot me fore I'd touch one of them goddam stiffs."

"The hell you would too. You'd goddam do what you're told in this army." Archer recognized the voice of the company clerk above the blur of words.

"Well, you c'n let me chase prisoners, corp."

"Say, Lieutenant," a sergeant drawled, "Yuh don't hafta put your hans on 'em do yuh?"

The officer looked up, and Archer noticed that his belt sagged below the waist and that his puttees were dull and clogged with clay.

"Sure. I go through their pockets and everything—you've got rubber gloves on. At first feel-

ing around for their identification tags gets you a little, but you soon get so's you don't mind any of it."

"Yuh don't hafta feel for they tags, do yuh?"

"You gotta find out if you've got the right man, haven't you? Lots of 'em don't have the same name on their crosses. But we've got pretty nearly all of 'em right now I guess."

"There ain't nothin' to it." It was the company clerk again, a swarthy youth of twenty with black eyes set wide apart like a Mongolian's and a nose that looked as though it had been broken in childhood. "My father's an undertaker. He's got the largest undertakin' establishment in Tipville, Indiana, and when I was a kid he always wanted me to be an undertaker too. So one night he shut me in a room with a dead corpse and locked the door and kept me there all night so's I wouldn't be afraid no more."

The officer hovered at the edge of the pit, looking, with his crooked nose and blue-filmed eyes like a chicken, like an old cock moulting his dusty and bedraggled plumage. He took the pick from one of the negroes and dug vigorously for a minute.

"There, that's more like it. Up this way a little. We'll have him out before you know it."

Maladroitly, stubbornly, the negro placed himself in the shallow pit to dig again. Already this cleft in the earth was two feet deep and these men were buried, each close to the spot where he had

been killed, with only so much earth as would cover their putrescence. Archer dreaded the moment when the first flesh would be exposed.

The earth in the hole became cooler and more moist. The negroes no longer dared thrust their heavy feet into the pit, but leaned from the edge, digging slowly and cautiously, pecking at the earth with the steel point, scraping the earth away as soon as it was loosened. Something damp and woolly appeared—a mouldy patch of blanket. The officer took the pick and straddling the pit deepened the sides, deftly loosening the remaining earth. An equivocal mass, bundled in olive drab wool bulked under the sticky clay. Once where the pit had torn the rotted blanket, it crumbled and pushed out a lichen green grit.

"Now give me the wire—we'll drag this one out by the shoulders."

Archer turned away, looking out over that hard arid plain to which the freshness and green of May could bring no relief, nor the sun which elsewhere gilded the earth any colour. The uneven ground was still, after a winter of rain, littered with the refuse of battle, knapsacks, pack-carriers, bits of clothing, shoes, rifles—everything that could be thrown away in the hurry and despair of fight. Pitted, broken by depressions, the greenish drab soil dragged slowly toward the hills at the sky's edge, the once contented hills, rounded with thickets, their slopes open and fox-red where six months before hollow

shelters had been scooped out by bayonets. In the dizzy blue distance, overtopping the nearer trees, shone the heights of the Argonne ragged with gay green forests. Over them the sky drew thin streamers of hazy white.

Then he thought: "This is too soft. I'm a damn weak-wad if I can't stand looking at it." And he walked back, keeping close to the barbed wire.

The soldiers were silent and constrained. The negroes crouched sullenly, blue denim figures bent at the side of the grave, the sweat curdling the dust on their idle black hands. The officer, one foot thrust forward, the other crooked under his weight, tugged at the wire, which held under its lower loops an amorphous mass, caught beneath the armpits. Archer saw first a knitted sweater, still intact but soppy from the putrefaction beneath it. A clayey brown rag was over the face. The taut wire pulled again, sharply; something broke near the throat and a greenish blue substance, like a fowl's ordure, crumbled and fell over the sweater.

"What the hell! Give me that pick."

An arm was embedded in the earth at one side. The pick tore into the soft flesh and the aperture showed a horrid pink; something was left behind in the hard clay. The cadaver began to lift itself from the grave. The jointless head fell back, thickening the greenish ooze on the neck; the uneven arms spread out with each jerk of the wire,

hunching their slimy sleeves. In the space where the thighs divide a glinting puddle of muck had seeped through the breeches cloth. The legs trailed woodenly.

The cadaver bent backward over the brink of the pit and dragged heavily on the ground.

"There! he didn't come so badly at that. A lot better'n some of 'em. Now roll him over on the blanket."

The negroes pushed the lifeless man over the sod and turned his bulk face up on a clean blanket. The officer began palping the dead flesh, searching for the metal disc at the neck.

Disgust clutched at Archer's sides. It was horrible that this putrescent thing sprawling on the ground should have been a few months before a boy, fine with youth, warm and strong. He had thought of death in battle as something clean and swift in its anguish. He had thought it a desirable thing that life should go out violently when the blood was at its full and the body unspent. He had never dreaded death, only manglement and disease and the slow dissolution of time. But here the body was not utterly dead; it had acquired a new life in its very putrefaction. It would go on for a long time yet, still younger than the earth in which it was hidden, not utterly dead as the dust and stones are dead.

He stared down into the violated pit. The clay

looked mildewed. Black flies were dangled in the air. Hands were fumbling at a green discoloured throat. Wires were wheeling in circles of steel with tiny prickles of light. His stomach was turning with the wires. His eyes were being jabbed by the steel barbs. That was why he was so hot. He must get away . . . to his tent . . . it was cool there with linden boughs and shadowy and sweet.

Behind him walked the southern sergeant and the company clerk.

"I bet them black bastards thinks about ghosts the rest of their life."

"Well, that's all they're fit for, ain't they? Every time they put 'em in to fight they run—right over in these woods here—the black sons o' bitches ain't fit for gun fodder!"

He walked back to the road, dragging a shadow not cast by the sun. The rumbling of trucks bumping all day long over the roads, with jangling chains and strident gears, trailing the same pervasive odour of decay; the blanketed mass he had just seen, with its poor upturned face, had broken down within him some last wall of resisting flesh. Even the air seemed to belong to the dead, and this plain, lying as it did midway between the Argonne Hills and the Meuse, had, perhaps because he was an American, become to him the centre of all the rotting desolation which filled the world.

On one side of the road, rising behind his own tent, was a green slope, topped with thickets, where the spring renewed itself remorselessly. And on one side was that desolate plain where so many of the young had died. He stared at the dessicated grass and the dun weeds, the earth pocked and fever skinned, made sterile by long pain. His squeamishness gave way to pity, pity for himself and the others. After all, it would have been better he thought, better than this, to have gone in the carnage and assault of war—not to feel the pain of desire any more, to have the rain run through his body as once the blood had run, to have his bones grow old under earth, not to be, or to be only as those others were, to share the dark, vindictive life of the earth, and not to know.

Some one was talking in his tent; Bleeker must have come back. He felt at that moment too utterly exposed to bear the level look of Bleeker's indecent eyes, and stood, nerveless and cold, outside the tent, turning his face toward the blue, brutal glare of noon. The negroes returned to the truck, carrying picks and spades. The smoke from the mess shack thickened darkly against the sun; under their shed the cooks moved between the tables and the fires like ruddy shadows. After all he was but a man among others. Lifting the flap he went into the tent.

Bleeker was standing in the centre of the tent, his cap set jauntily on one side, talking to his orderly.

"Hello Lootnant! I'm back at last, and boy, I

want to tell you I've drunk so much champagne in the last five days, I'm just naturally breathing bubbles."

Archer sat down on his cot. The orderly left the tent.

"I was all set to come back night 'fore last, and then I thought I'll just go down to the Olympia and have one more look at the mademoselles 'fore I came back. Well I was standin' there at the bar downstairs, with my foot cocked on the rail. And there was one of these tousled blonds sittin' on one of those high stools, you know, and I was kiddin' her along—she wasn't a bit bad—she didn't have no stockings on, just bare legs the whole way, and high heel slippers—when in comes my old captain out of the Thirty-eighth, with two of the best lookin' janes you ever saw. And, boy, I was lost right there. I just said, 'Good-bye, Montfaucon!' I just couldn't get away till this morning."

"It's all right. There wasn't much of anything to do."

"I didn't think there would be, and anyhow this was somethin' too good to pass up.

"You don't have to check out no more with the M. P.'s. You know how they used to be in Paris. But I was kinda skittish, so I eased down to the station this morning about five o'clock. And the first goddam thing I saw when I got there was an M. P. I kept one eye slanted on him and started beatin' it for the train, when up he comes, and salutes just as

nice as you please, and says, 'Can I show the Lieutenant where to get his ticket?' and 'Where's the Lieutenant goin'?' and 'That's your track, sir.' Boy, you could've knocked me down with a feather. By the way, I got some good cognac here—five star stuff. How 'bout a drink before mess?"

"Well . . . yes, give me a drink."

Archer tipped the bottle to his mouth, scraping his throat with the raw liquor, warming and comforting his stomach.

Bleeker slung his musette bag over his shoulder. "I think I'll take a look in at my tent, and dump this junk before mess," he said, "Take another drink."

Archer stared for a moment at the young officer in front of him with his hard assertive air and the voice that seemed to start from too far down in his throat. It did not much matter that he had come back.

"Here's yesterday's paper, if you want to see it," Bleeker turned and, stooping, went out of the tent.

Archer picked up the paper, the Paris edition of an American journal. Fashionable people were arriving at fashionable hotels, dining in company, being entertained by Napoleonic princesses. The Peace Conference had met in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles. The German emissary had, with characteristic arrogance, remained standing while addressing the elderly and elegant Allied politicians. There had been a loud outcry. The Y. M. C. A. was holding boxing bouts at the Palais

de Glace, to provide the American soldiers on leave with wholesome and moral amusement.

Staring distractedly at the obscure print, he thought of all these impotent fastidious people in Paris who, whatever they touched of civilized thought and grace, left it inane; he saw that they represented a desolation no less complete than the abrupt height of Montfaucon, and the hillside under it pitted with open graves, empty now as tombs of the resurrection. For the rest there was Bleeker, with thick reddish skin and hard mouth, standing with legs apart loosening a bawdy tale. And he hated Bleeker.

He flung himself on the canvas cot and lay there with arms distended, his face rubbing against the soiled pillow, his thoughts wheeling confusedly as bubbles in an uneven stream. He resented fiercely being held here, trapped and held in this charnel place, away from the dizzy green and gay abandon of cities, the sidewalks fragrant and rustling with silk. What wild joy it would be but to stretch his legs under the tables in painted cafés, and to drink, to drink long.

Anywhere would be better than here, where the water was tainted and the soil dead, and even the air came unclean. In Paris whatever was left of life ran at the full. The sunlight came to the streets strained through a green net of leaves, and the night would be filled with lights and amorous voices, and women were there who could be bought for a

night and forgotten in the morning. Nothing was left but the fine vigour of his body, still young, and beginning to stir with heat from the liquor he had drunk. He lay on his cot stretched with resentment and sultry desires until aflame through his whole length with youth and loneliness.

Bleeker thrust his ruddy face between the flaps of the tent.

"What t' hell's the matter, Lootnant! Mess is ready, let's go. I'm as hungry as a hound dog. I didn't have nothin' this morning but some bread and coffee. And last night was a hard night too, I'm tellin' you."

"All right. I'm not very hungry, but I guess there's nothing else to do." Then he said, "I might go to Paris myself if I can get a leave through."

Outside, he stooped for a moment to twist and fasten the loose ribbon of his spiral puttee. Bleeker glanced across the road.

"You've had that grave taken up out of the stockade, I see," he said, "haven't you?"

"Yes," said Archer, "They came for him this morning." And straightening his body he felt the sun warm on his face and hands, and the light of May burnished his uncovered hair.